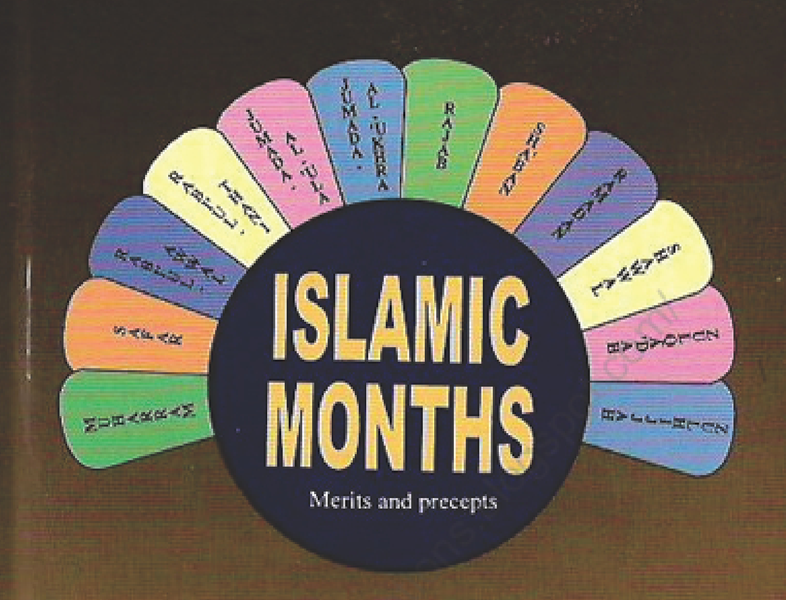


By

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CONTENTS



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمدلله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على رسوله الكريم وعلى آله وأصحابه أجمعين

PREFACE

Allah Almighty is the Creator of this universe and all that is found therein including time and space. Every day of a month and every month of a year is created by Him out of His infinite wisdom. Every minute of one's life is a divine gift which should be availed of to seek Allah's pleasure and to make it a prologue to a better life in the Hereafter. Looking at from this angle, all days and months are alike. None is useless, unlucky or devoid of sanctity. We are required to make best use of them by observing the precepts of Shari'ah. Once this is done all days and months are sacred for us, but if the precepts of Shari'ah are violated, no sanctity of a special day or month can save us from its repercussions.

However, Allah has attached a special sanctity to some particular days or months in the sense that some specific rules are prescribed to observe them, or the reward of virtuous deeds is increased therein. This special sanctity of a period of time accelerates one's advance towards the spiritual progress whereby one can maximise the benefits of his efforts.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon every Muslim to know the specific rules prescribed for these special days and months and the peculiar merits associated with them. The present book is a humble effort to provide a common reader with necessary information about these rules and merits.

It is evident that special rules or merits of a particular time cannot be established through one's own whims or imaginations, unless they are proved by the authentic sources of Shari'ah. As explained earlier, all days and months are alike in their origin. It is Allah's will that invests a particular time with a special status. Therefore, no such status can be attributed to a particular time unless it is either established in the Holy Qur'an or is explained by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his *Sunnah*. But unfortunately, some communities among the Muslims have attributed special merits or invented some practices which have no foundation in the Holy Qur'an and *Sunnah*. These self-coined practices must be avoided. The present book has dealt with some of these practices also. The objective is to explain what one should or should not do in a particular month or date with reference to the original sources of Shari'ah. May Allah approve this humble effort and make it beneficial to the readers.

Muhammad Taqi Usmani

13, Jumada-al-Thaniyah 1416 A.H

The Month of MUHARRAM

Muharram is the month with which the Muslims begin their lunar Hijrah Calendar. It is one of the four sanctified months about which the Holy Qur'an says,

انّ عدّة الشهور عندالله اثنا عشر شهرا فى كتاب الله يوم خلق السموات والأرض منها أربعة حرم

"The number of the months according to Allah is twelve months (mentioned) in the Book of Allah on the day in which He created heavens and the earth. Among these (twelve months) there are four sanctified".

These four months, according to the authentic traditions are the months of Zulqa'dah, Zulhijjah, Muharram and Rajab. All the commentators of the Holy Qur'an are unanimous on this point, because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in his sermon on the occasion of his last Hajj, has declared:

السنة اثنا عشر شهراً أربعة حرم، ثلاث متواليات:

ذوالقعده، وذوالحجه، والمحرم ورجب .

> One year consists of twelve months, of which four are sanctified months, three of them are in sequence; Zulqa'dah, Zulhijjah, Muharram, and the fourth is Rajab.

The specific mention of these four months does not mean that any other month has no sanctity, because the month of Ramadan is admittedly the most sanctified month in the year. But these four months were specifically termed as sanctified months for the simple reason that their sanctity was accepted even by the pagans of Makkah.

In fact, every month, out of the twelve, is originally equal to the other, and there is no inherent sanctity which may be attributed to one of them in comparison to other months. When Allah Almighty chooses a particular time for His special blessings, then it acquires sanctity out of His grace.

Thus, the santity of these four months was recognized right from the days of Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام . Since the Pagans of Makkah attributed themselves to Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام they observed the sanctity of these four months and despite their frequent tribal battles, they held it unlawful to fight in these months.

In the Shari'ah of our Holy Prophet ﷺ the sanctity of these months was upheld and the Holy Qur'an re-

ferred to them as the "sanctified months".

The month of Muharram has certain other characteristics peculiar to it which are specified below.

1. Fasting during the month

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

أفضل الصيام بعد شهر رمضان شهرالله المحرام

The best fasts after the fasts of Ramadan are those of the month of Muharram.

Although the fasts of the month of Muharram are not obligatory, yet, the one who fasts in these days out of his own will and choice is entitled to a great reward by Allah Almighty. The Hadith cited above signifies that the fasts of the month of Muharram are most rewardable ones among the *Nafl* fasts i.e. the fasts one observes out of his own choice without being obligatory on him.

The hadith does not mean that the award promised for fasts of Muharram can be achieved only by fasting for the whole month. On the contrary, each fast during this month has merit. Therefore, one should avail of this opportunity as much as he can.

2. The day of 'Ashurah'

Although the month of Muharram is a sanctified month as a whole, yet, the 10th day of Muharram is the most sacred among all its days. The day is named 'Ashurah'.

According to the Holy companion Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه, The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, when migrated to Madinah, found that the Jews of Madinah used to fast on the 10th day of Muharram. They said that it was the day on which the Holy Prophet Musa (Moses) عليه السلام and his followers crossed the Red Sea miraculously and the Pharaoh was drowned in its water. On hearing this from the Jews, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "We are more closely related to Musa than you" and directed the Muslims to fast on the day of 'Ashura'. (Abu Dawood)

It is also reported in a number of authentic traditions that in the beginning, fasting on the day of 'Ahura' was obligatory for the Muslims. It was later that the fasts of Ramadan were made obligatory and the fast on the day of 'Ashura' was made optional. Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها has said:

فلما قدم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المدينة صامه وأمر بصيامه. فلما فرض رمضان كان هو الفريضة وترك عاشوراء، من شاء صامه ومن شاء تركه [1]

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to Madinah, he fasted on the day of 'Ashura' and directed the people to fast it. But when the fasts of Ramadan were made obligatory, the obligation of fasting was confined to Ramadan and the obligatory na-

١- سنن ابوداؤد .

ture of the fast of 'Ashura' was abandoned. One can fast on this day, if he so wills, or can avoid fasting, if he so wills.

However, the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to fast on the day of 'Ashura' even after the fasting in Ramadan was made obligatory. Abdullâh ibn Mas'ûd رضی الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ preferred the fast of 'Ashura' to the fast of other days and preferred the fast of Ramadan to the fast of 'Ashura'. (Bukharî and Muslim)

In short, it is established through a number of authentic *ahâdîth* that fasting on the day of 'Ashura' is *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and makes one entitled to a great reward.

According to another *hadith*, it is more advisable that the fast of Ashura should either be prefixed or suffixed by another fast. It means that one should fast two days: the 9th an 10th of Muharram or the 10th and 11th of it. The reason of this additional fast as mentioned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ is that the Jews used to fast on the day of 'Ashurâ alone, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ wanted to distinguish the Islamic-way of fasting from that of Jews. Therefore, he advised the Muslims to add another fast to that of 'Ashura'.

Some traditions signify another feature of the day of '*Ashura*. According to these traditions one should be more generous to his family by providing more food to them on this day as compared to other days. These traditions are not very authentic according to the sci-

ence of *hadith*. Yet, some Scholars like Baihaqi and Ibn Hibban have accepted them as reliable.

What is mentioned above is all that is supported through authentic sources about *Ashura*. However, there are some legends and misconceptions with regard to *Ashura* that have managed to find their way into the minds of the ignorant, but have no support of authentic Islamic sources, some very common of them are these:

This is the day in which Adam عليه السلام was created.

This is the day in which Ibrahim عليه السلام was born.

This is the day in which Allah accepted the repentance of Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام .

This is the day on which the *Qiyamah* (dooms-day) will take place.

Whoever takes bath in the day of *'Ashura'* will never get ill.

All these and other similar whims and fancies are totally baseless and the traditions referred to in this respect are not worthy of any credit.

Some people take it as *Sunnah* to prepare a particular type of meal in the day of *'Ashura'*. This practice, too, has no basis in the authentic Islamic sources.

Some other people attribute the sanctity of *'Ashura'* to the martyrdom of Sayyidna Husain رضی الله عنه during his battle with the Syrian army. No doubt, the martyrdom of Sayyidna Husain رضی الله عنه is one of the most tragic episodes of our history. Yet, the sanctity of *'Ashura'* cannot be ascribed to this event for the simple reason that the sanctity of 'Ashura' was established during the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ much earlier than the birth of Sayyidna Husain رضی الله عنه .

On the contrary, it is one of the merits of Sayyidna Husain that his martyrdom took place on the day of *'Ashura'*.

Another misconception about the month of Muharram is that it is an evil or unlucky month, for Sayyidna Husain was killed in it. It is for this misconception that people avoid holding marriage ceremonies in the month of Muharram. This is again a baseless concept which is contrary to the express teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Such superstitions have been totally negated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . If the death of an eminent person in a particular day renders that day unlucky for all times to come, one can hardly find a day, free from this bad luck, out of 365 days of the whole year, because each and every day has a history of the demise of some eminent person. The Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have made us free from such superstitious beliefs, and they should deserve no attention.

Another wrong practice related to this month is to hold the lamentation and mourning ceremonies in the memory of martyrdom of Sayyidna Husain رضی الله عنه . As mentioned earlier, the event of *Karbala* is one of the most tragic events of our history, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden us from holding the mourning ceremonies on the death of any person. The people of *Jahiliyyah* (Ignorance) used to mourn over their deceased relatives or friends through loud lamentations, by tearing their clothes and by beating their cheeks and chests. The Holy Prophet ﷺ stopped the Muslims from doing all this and directed them to observe patience by saying إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون . A number of authentic *ahâdith* are available on the subject. To quote only one of them:

ليس منا من ضرب الخدود، وشق الجيوب، ودعا بدعوة الجاهلية [1]

"He is not from our group who slaps his cheeks, tears his clothes and cries in the manner of the people of jahiliyyah."

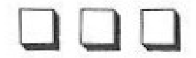
All the authentic jurists are unanimous on the point that the mourning of this type is absolutely impermissible. Even Sayyidnâ Husain رضی الله عنه shortly before his demise, had advised his beloved sister Sayyidah Zainab رضی الله عنها not to mourn over his death in this manner. He said:

١- صحيح البخاری كتاب الجنائز .

يا أخية إني أقسم عليك ، لا تشقى على جيبا ، ولا تخمشى على وجها ولا تدعى على بالويل والثبور إن هلكت [1]

"My dear sister, I swear upon you that you, in case I die, shall not tear your clothes, nor scratch your face, nor curse anyone for me or pray for your death".

It is evident from this advice of Sayyidnâ Husain رضى الله عنه that this type of mourning is condemned even by the blessed person for the memory of whom these mourning ceremonies are held. Every Muslim should avoid this practice and abide by the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his beloved grand child Sayyidna Husain رضى الله عنه.



١- الكامل ابن اثير، جلد ٤ صفحه ٢٤.

The Month of
SAFAR

"Safar" is the second month in the Islamic calender. It is one of "Al-Ashhur-al-hurum" the four sanctified months in which battle was prohibited in the days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . However, no specific mode of worship or other special rules are set by the Shari'ah to observe this month.

some people believe that this month is an unlucky month, therefore, they avoid to hold marriage ceremonies or any other happy gatherings in this month. This belief is totally baseless and it is a part of the superstitions rampant in the ignorants of Arbia before the advent of islam. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم eradicated all such superstitious beliefs. Specially in the case of the month of Safar, he expressly said,

لاَ صَفَرَ

(To hold) the month of Safar (as unlucky) is nothing.

Therefore, Muslims should not give ear to such superstitions. There is no problem in holding marriaes etc. in this month.

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The Month of RABI'UL-AWWAL

The month of Rabi'ul-Awwal is the most significant month in the Islamic history, because humanity has been blessed in this month by the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Before the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, not only the Arabian peninsula, but also the so-called civilized nations of Rome and Persia were drowned in the darkness of ignorance, superstitions, oppression and unrest. The Holy Prophet ﷺ came with the eternal truth of *Tawhid* (Oneness of Allah), the only faith which provides a firm basis for the real concepts of knowledge, equity and peace. It was this faith which delivered humanity from ignorance and superstitions and spread the light of true knowledge all over the world.

Thus the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the most significant and the most remarkable event in human history. Had there been room in Islamic teachings for the celebration of birthdays or anniversaries, the birthday of the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have undoubtedly deserved it more than the birthday of

any other person.

But the nature of Islamic teachings is such that their main stress is directed towards practicalism instead of formalism. That is why, unlike Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism, there are very few festivals in Islam which provides for only two *Eids* (*Eidulfitr* and *Eidul-Adha*) during the whole year. The dates of these two Eids do not correspond to the birthday of any of the outstanding persons of Islamic history, nor can their origin be attributed to any particular event of history which had happened in these dates.

Both of these two Eids have been prescribed for paying gratitude to Allah on some happy events which take place every year. The first event is the completion of the fasts of Ramadan and the second event is the completion of Hajj, another form of worship regarded as one of the four pillars of Islam.

The manner prescribed for the celebration of these two *Eids* (Festivals) is also different from non-Islamic festivals. There are no formal processions, illumination or other activities showing formal happiness. On the contrary, there are prayer congregation and informal mutual visits to each other which can give real happiness instead of its symbols only.

On the other hand, Islam has not prescribed any festival for the birthday of any person, however great or significant he may be. The prophets of Allah are the

persons of the highest status amongst all human beings. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ or his noble companions never observed the birthday or anniversary of any of them. Even the birthday of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which was the most happy day for the whole mankind was never celebrated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, nor by his blessed Companions.

The Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ remained alive after him for about a century, but despite their unparalleled and profound love towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they never celebrated the birthday or the death anniversary of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Instead, they devoted their lives for promoting the cause of Islam, for bringing his teachings into practice, for conveying his message to the four corners of the world and for establishing the Islamic order in every walk of life.

In fact, commemorating the birth of a distinguished person has never been prescribed by any religion attributing itself to divine revelation. It was originally a custom prevalent in pagan communities only. Even Christmas, the famous Christian feast commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ finds no mention in the Bible or in the early Christian writings. It was only in the 4th century after the ascension of Jesus Christ that Christmas was recognized as a regular Christian feast. To quote the Collier's Encyclopedia:

> "It is impossible to determine the exact date of the birth of Christ, either from the evidence of the gospels, or from any sound tradition. During the first three centuries of the Christian era there was considerable opposition in the Church to the pagan custom of celebrating birthdays, although there is some indication that a purely religious commemoration of the birth of Christ was included in the feast of Epiphany. Clement of Alexandria mentions the existence of the feast in Egypt about the year A.D. 200 and we have some evidence that it was observed on various dates in scattered areas. After the triumph of Constantine, the Church at Rome assigned December 25 as the date for the celebration of the feast, possibly about A.D. 320 or 353. By the end of the fourth century the whole Christian world was celebrating Christmas on that day, with the exception of the Eastern Churches, where it was celebrated on January 6. The choice of December 25 was probably influenced by the fact that on this day the Romans celebrated the Mithraic feast of the Sun-God, and that the Saturnalia also came at this time." (Collier's Encyclopedia 1984 ed. v. 6, p. 403).

A similar description of the origin of Christmas is found in the Encyclopedia Britannica with some more details. Its following passage will throw more light on the point:

> "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church, and before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether on Jan. 6, March 25 or Dec. 25. The earliest identifica-

> tion of Dec. 25 with the birthday of Christ is in a passage, otherwise unknown and probably spurious, of the philos of Antioch (c.180), preserved in Latin by the Magdeburyg centuriators (i, 3, 118), to the effect that the Gauls contended that since they celebrated the birth of Lord on Dec. 25, so they ought to celebrate the resurrection on March 25. A passage, almost certainly interpolated, in 'Hippelates' (c. 202) commentary on Daniel iv, 23, says that Jesus was born at Bethlehem on Wednesday, Dec. 25, in the 42nd year of Augustus, but he mentions no feast, and such a feast, indeed, would conflict with the then orthodox ideas. As late as 245 Origin (hom. viii on Leviticus) repudiated the idea of keeping the birthday of Christ "as if he were a king Pharaoh". (Britannica, 1953 ed. v. 5, p.642)

These two extracts are more than sufficient to prove the following points:

1. The commemoration of birthdays was originally a pagan custom, never recognized by a divine scripture or a prophetic teaching.

2. The exact date of the Birth of Sayyidna 'Isa is unknown and impossible to be ascertained.

3. The commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ was not a recognized practice in the early centuries of the Christian history.

4. It was in the 4th or 5th century that it was recognized as a religious feast, and that, too, under the influence of the pagans who worshipped Sun-God.

5. There was a strong opposition against the commemorating the birthday by the early Christian scholars like Origin, on the ground that it is originally a custom of pagans and idolaters.

In original Islamic resources also we cannot find any instruction about the celebration of birthdays or death anniversaries. Many Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed away during his life-time. His beloved wife Sayyidah Khadijah رضی اللہ عنہا passed away in Makkah. His beloved uncle Sayyidna Hamzah رضی اللہ عنہ was brutally slaughtered during the battle of Uhud. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ never observed their birthday or their death anniversaries, nor did he ever advise his followers to celebrate his own birthday in Rabi'ul-Awwal.

The reason for abstinence from such celebrations is that they divert the attention of people from the real teachings of Islam towards the observance of some formal activities only. Initially, these celebrations may begin with utmost piety and with a *bona fide* intention to pay homage to a pious person. Yet the experience shows that the celebration is ultimately mixed up with an element of merrymaking and rejoicing and is generally confused with secular festivals, and the secular, and often sinful, activities creep into it gradually.

The example of Christmas will again be relevant.

This Christian feast was originally innovated to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ and, of course, to memorize his teachings. But once the occasion has been recognized as a feast, all the secular elements of public festivals crept in. The following quotation from the Encyclopedia Britannia is worth attention:

> "For several centuries Christmas was solely a church anniversary observed by religious services. But as Christianity spread among the people of pagan lands, many of the practices of the winter solstice were blended with those of Christianity because of the liberal ruling of Gregory I, the great, and the cooperation of the missionaries. Thus, Christmas became both religious and secular in its celebration, at times reverent, at others gay."

Then, what kind of activities have been adopted to celebrate Christmas is mentioned in the next paragraphs of which the following extract is more pertinent here to quote:

> "Merrymaking came to have a share in Christmas observance through popular enthusiasm even while emphasis was on the religious phase. ... In the wholly decked great halls of the feudal lords, whose hospitality extended to all their friends, tenants and household, was sailing, feasting, singing and games, dancing, masquerading and mummers presenting pantomimes and masques were all part of the festivities."
> (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1953 v. 5, p. 643)

This is enough to show as to how an apparently innocent feast of reverence was converted into a secular festival where the merrymaking and seeking enjoyment by whatever means took preference over all the religious and spiritual activities.

Being fully aware of this human psychology, Islam has never prescribed, nor encouraged the observance of birthdays and anniversaries, and when such celebrations are observed as a part of the religion they are totally forbidden. The Holy Qur'an has clearly pronounced on the occasion of the last Hajj of the Holy Prophet ﷺ :

اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ

> Today, I have completed (the teachings of) your religion.

It means that all the teachings of Islam were communicated to the Muslims through the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . No one is allowed after it to add any thing to them as a part of religion. What was not a part of religion during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ can never form part of it at any following occasion. Such additions are termed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as *Bid'ah* or innovation.

Thus, the observance of the 12th of Rabi'ul-Awwal as a religious feast is not warranted by any verse of the Holy Qur'an or by any teaching of the Holy

Prophet ﷺ. Had it been a part of the religion it would have been clearly ordered or practiced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed companions or, at least, by their immediate pupils. But no example of the celebration of the occasion can be traced out in the early centuries of the Islamic history. It was after centuries that some monarchs started observing the 12th of Rabi'ul-Awwal as the birthday of the Holy Prophet ﷺ without a sound religious basis, and the congregations in the name of *Maulood* or *Milad* were held where the history of the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to be narrated. The observance of the 12th of this month as the birthday of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not only an innovation having no basis in the Islamic teachings, but the accuracy of this date as the real birthday of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is also very much doubted. There are different dates suggested in different traditions, and the majority of the authentic scholars is inclined to hold that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was born on the 9th of Rabi'ul-Awwal. This difference of opinion is another evidence to prove that the observance of the birthday is not a part of the religion, otherwise its exact date would have been preserved with accuracy.

The life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is, no doubt, the most important source of guidance for all the Muslims, and every Muslim is under an obligation to learn and study the events of his lfe, and to follow the practical example set by him in every sphere of life. The

narration of his pious biography (the Seerah) in itself is a pious act which invites the divine blessings, but the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah have not prescribed a particular time or method for it. This pious act should be performed in all the months and in all the times. The month of Rabi'ul-Awwal has not been taken by the Shariah as a special season for holding such congregations to commemorate the birth or life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It is thus an innovation *(Bid'ah)* to restrict the Seerah meetings to the month of Rabi'ul-Awwal only, or to believe that the meetings held in this month are worthy of more reward than the meetings held on any other date during the year. In fact, the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to commemorate the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ throughout the year, not only by studying and conveying his message to others, but also by following his way of life and acting upon his teachings in each and every branch of their activities, and this is exactly what a Muslim is required and supposed to do. By this we do not mean that the Seerah meetings should not be held in the month of Rabi'ul-Awwal. The point is only that they should not be restricted to it, nor should it be believed that the Shariah has laid any kind of emphasis on holding such meetings in this particular month.

Another point which should always be kept in mind while holding such meetings that they must be in complete conformity with the rules of Shariah. A

Muslim is supposed to abide by the rules of Shariah in all his activities. But at least the meetings held in the memory of the Holy Prophet ﷺ should be free from all the acts forbidden by the Shariah.

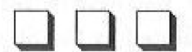
It is often observed, especially in the Western countries, that the people hold the Seerah meetings where men and women sit together without observing the rules of *hijab* prescribed by the Shariah. The teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are obviously against such mixed gatherings. How can a Seerah meeting bring fruits where such fundamental teachings of the Shariah are openly violated?

In some meetings the Na'ts (poems) in the memory of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are recited by the women before the male audience, sometimes with music, which is totally against the instructions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is clearly prohibited by the Shariah to hold such meetings or to participate in them, because it is not only a violation of the Shariah rules, but it amounts to outraging the sanctity of the Seerah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

All other activities, often practiced on the twelfth of Rabi'ul-Awwal, like holding processions, constructing the artificial tombs of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and illumination of the buildings and the roads are not warranted by any rule of the Shariah. Rather they are based on conscious or unconscious imitation of certain other religions. No example of such activi-

ties can be traced out from the earlier Islamic hisory.

What is really important with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is, firstly, to follow his teachings, and secondly to make his pious Seerah available to every Muslim, to preserve it in the hearts of the Muslims from the very childhood, to educate the family members to run their lives according to it and to hold it as the most glorious example of the human conduct the universe has ever witnessed -- and all this with utmost love and reverence, not manifested by some formal activities only, but also through actual behaviour of following the Sunnah. This cannot be done by merely holding processions and illuminating the walls. This requires constant and consistent efforts and a meaningful programme of education and training.



The Month of
RABÎ'UL-THANI

This month is also called "Rabi'ul-'akhir". No specific function or worship has been prescribed by the Shari'ah in this month. However, some people take the 11th of this month as the anniversary of Shaikh Abdulqadir al-Jilani رحمة الله عليه, the great sufi and one of the most pious persons of our history. On this assumption, these people cook some special types of meals and distribute them among their acquaintants. Some of them believe that this practice pleases the soul of the Shaikh رحمة الله عليه, and he will help us in fulfilling our worldly needs or in reaching our mundane or spiritual goals.

This practice is totaly baseless for a number of reasons:

Firstly, it is not historically proved with certainty that the Shaikh رحمة الله عليه, died on the 11th of this month. Some historians claim that he died on 9th and some of them hold that he died on 17th.

Secondly, even if it is proved that he had died on

11th of this month, the observation of anniversaries is not recognized by the Shari'ah, as we have explained it with more details earlier while discussing the month of Rabī'ul-awwal.

Thirdly, if the practice is based on the belief that the soul of the Shaikh will be pleased by it and will help us in our worldly affairs, it is totally an erroneous idea and may amount to '*shirk*'.

Fourthly, even if these acts are performed for the purpose of '*Īsâl-al-thawâb* only, there is no reason why a specific date is fixed for this purpose, and why the people not observing it are blamed and reproached.

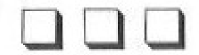
Fifthly, the '*Īsâl-al-thawâb*' can be conceived where an '*ibadah* (act of worship) is done like *sadaqah,* but here in this practice normally the meal is distributed among the well-off relatives or friends and not among the poor. It means that there is no intention to perform an '*ibadah*.

Sixthly, if some mundane benefits are sought by this practice, no *thawâb* is supposed to be achieved. How can it be an act of '*Īsal-al-thawâb?*

In short, looked at from any angle, this custom does not fit in the recognized principles of Shari'ah. Therefore, it should be abandoned in any case.

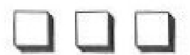
It must be remembered, however, that what we have said does not mean that one cannot make an

'isal-al-thawâb to the Shaikh Abdulqadir Jilani. In fact the *'isal-al-thawâb* is a recognized practice in Shari'ah. It becomes more commendable if it is done in favor of a pious person, like Shaikh Abdulqadir Jilani. But it should not be restricted to a particular date or a particular act. A Muslim can make *'isal-al-thawâb* to the Shaikh any day and through any act of worship, like *salah*, fasting, charity etc.



The Month of **JUMÂDA-AL-’ÛlÂ** And **JUMÂDA-AL-’UKHRÂ**

Both these months have no special rules, nor are there any specific customs practiced by the Muslim people in these months.



The Month of RAJAB

Rajab is the seventh month in the Islamic lunar calendar. This month was regarded as one of the sacred months (*Al-Ashhur-al-hurum*) in which battles were prohibited in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is also deemed to be a prelude to the month of Ramadân, because the month Ramadân follows it after the intervening month of Sha'bân. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ sighted the moon of Rajab, he used to pray Allah in the following words:

اللهمّ بارك لنا فى رجب وشعبان وبلّغنا رمضان

O Allah, make the months of Rajab and Sha'bân blessed for us, and let us reach the month of Ramadân (i.e. prolong our life upto Ramadân, so that we may benefit from its merits and blessings).

Although the month of Rajab has aforesaid merits, yet no specific way of worship has been prescribed by the Shari'âh in this month. However, some people have invented some special rituals or practices in this month which are not supported by reliable resources

of the Shari'ah or are based on some unauthentic traditions. We would like to explain here the correct position about them.

1. Celebration of *Lailatul Mi'raj*

It is generally believed that the great event of *Mi'râj* (ascension of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the heavens) took place in the night of 27th of Rajab. Therefore, some people celebrate the night as "*Lailatul-Mi'râj*" (the night of ascension to heavens).

Indeed, the event of *mi'raj* was one of the most remarkable episodes in the life of our beloved Holy Prophet ﷺ . He was called by Almighty Allah. He travelled from Makkah to Baitul-Maqdis and from there he ascended the heavens through the miraculous power of Allah. He was honoured with a direct contract with his Creator at a place where even the angels had no excess. This was the unique honour conferred by Allah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone. It was the climax of the spiritual progress which is not attained by anybody except him. No doubt the night in which he was blessed with this unparalleled honour was one of the great nights in the history of this world. But, as we have explained in our discussion about the month of Rabi'ul-awwal, Islam has its own principles with regard to the historic and religious events. Its approach about observing festivals and celebrating days and nights is totally different from the approach of other religions. The Holy Qur'an and the

Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not prescribe any festival or any celebration to commemorate an event from the past, however remarkable it might have been. Instead, Islam has prescribed two annual celebrations only. One is *Eid-ul-Fitr* and the other is *Eid-ul-Adhâ*. Both of these festivals have been fixed at a date on which the Muslims accomplish a great *'ibâdah* (worship) every year. *Eid-ul-Fitr* has been prescribed after the fasts of Ramadân, while *Eid-ul-Adhâ* has been fixed when the Muslims perform the Hajj annually. None of these two *eids* is designed to commemorate a particular event of the past which has happened in these dates. This approach is indicative of the fact that the real occasion for a happy celebration is the day in which the celebrators themselves have accomplished remarkable work through their own active effort. As for the accomplishments of our ancestors, their commemoration should not be restricted to a particular day or night. Instead, their accomplishments must be remembered every day in the practical life by observing their teachings and following the great examples they have set for us.

Keeping this principle in view, the following points should be remembered with regard to the "*Lailatul-mi'râj*":

(1) We cannot say with absolute certainty in which night the great event of *mi'raj* had taken place. Although some traditions relate this event to 27th night

of the month of Rajab, yet there are other traditions which suggest some other dates. Al-Zurqani, the famous biographer of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has referred to five different views in this respect: Rabî'-ul-awwâl, Rabî'-ul-'âkhir, Rajab, Ramadân and Shawwal[1]. Later, while discussing different traditions, he has added a sixth opinion, that the *mi'raj* took place in the month of Zulhijjah. [2]

Allama Abdulhaq Muhaddith Dehlawi, the well-known scholar of the Indian sub-continent, has written a detailed book on the merits of Islamic months. While discussing the '*Lailatul-mi'râj*' he has mentioned that most of the scholars are of the view that the event of *mi'râj* took place in the month of Ramadân or in Rabî'ul-awwal. [3]

(2) It is also not certainly known in which year the event of *Mi'râj* had taken place. There are a number of views mentioned in the books of history which suggest a wide range between the fifth-year and the twelfth year after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was entrusted with prophethood.[4]

Now, if it is assumed that the event of *Mîrâj* took place in the fifth year of his prophethood, it will mean

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١- الذرقانى شرح المواهب، جلد ١ صفحه ٣٠٦ .

٢- الذرقانى شرح المواهب، جلد ١ صفحه ٣٠٨ .

٣- ماثبت بالسنة .

٤- الزرقاني : جلد ١ صفحه ٣٠٨ .

that the Holy Prophet ﷺ remained in this world for eighteen years after this event. Even if it is presumed that the *mi'raj* took place in the twelfth year of his prophethood, his remaining life-time after this event would be eleven years. Throughout this long period, which may range between eleven years and eighteen years, the Holy Prophet ﷺ never celebrated the event of *mi'raj,* nor did he give any instruction about it. No one can prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ ever performed some specific modes of worship in a night calling it the "*Lailatul-mi'raj*" or advised his followers to commemorate the event in a particular manner.

(3) After the demise of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also, no one of his companions is reported to celebrate this night as a night of special acts of worship. They were the true lovers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and had devoted their lives to preserve every minute detail of the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and other Islamic teachings. Still, they did not celebrate the event of *mi'râj* in a particular night in a particular way.

All these points go a long way to prove that the celebration of the 27th night of Rajab, being the *lailatul-mi'râj* has no basis in the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or in the practice of his noble companions. Had it been a commendable practice to celebrate this night, the exact date of this event would have been preserved accurately by the *Ummah* and the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed companions would have

given specific directions for it.

Therefore, it is not a *Sunnah* to celebrate the '*Lailatul-mi'râj*'. We cannot take any practice as a *sunnah* by our own emotions, unless it is established through authentic sources that the Holy Prophet ﷺ or his noble Companions have recognized it as such, otherwise it may become a *bid'ah* about which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has observed in the following words:

من احدث فی امرنا هذا مالیس منه فهورد

Whoever invents something in our religion which is not a part of it, it is to be rejected.

Being mindful of this serious warning, we should appreciate that the 27th night of the month of Rajab is not like '*Lailatul-qadr*' or '*Lailatul-bara'ah*' for which special merits have been mentioned expressly either by the Holy Qur'an or by the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

However, all the recognized modes of '*ibadah* (worship) like *salah*, recitation of the Holy Qur'an, *dhikr*, etc. are commendable any time, especially in the late hours of night, and obviously the 27th night of Rajâb is not an exception. Therefore, if someone performs any recognized '*ibadah* in this night from this point of view nothing can stop him from doing so, and he will be entitled to the *thawâb* (reward allocated for that recognized '*ibâdah insha-Allah*. But it is not permissible to believe that performing '*ibâdah* in this night is more meritorious or carries more *thawâb* like

'Lailatul-qadr' or *'Lailatul-bara'ah'*, because this belief is not based on any authentic verse or on a *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Similarly, it is not a correct practice to celebrate this night on a collective scale and to invite people to special ritual congregations.

(4) Some people suggest some special modes of worship to be performed in this night. Since no special mode of worship is prescribed by the Shari'ah in this night, these suggestions are devoid of any authority and should not be acted upon.

It is believed by some that the Muslims should keep fast on 27th of Rajab. Although there are some traditions attributing special merits to the fast of this day yet the scholars of *hadith* have held these traditions as very weak and unauthentic reports which cannot be sufficient to establish a rule of Shari'ah. On the contrary, there is an authentic report that Sayyidna 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ used to forbid people from fasting on this day, rather to compel them to eat if they had started fasting.

It should be borne in mind here that a "*nafl'* fast can be observed any day (except the six prohibited days of the year), therefore, fasting on 27th of Rajab is not prohibited in itself. What is prohibited is the belief that fasting on this day is more meritorious than fasting in other normal days. One should not fast in this day with this belief. But if someone fasts therein, believing it to be a normal *nafl* fast, there is no bar

against it.

Sacrifice (*qurbani*) in the month of Rajab

In the days of ignorance (*jahiliyyah*) the Arabs used to offer the sacrifice of a goat in the month of Rajab. This sacrifice used to be called "*Atirah*' or '*Rajabiyyah*'. This sacrifice was offered in the name of different so-called gods and their icons. In the beginning of Islam, this custom was retained, but the Muslims modified it by offering the sacrifice of '*Atirah* in the name of Allah instead of the false gods. But finally, this custom was abandoned and the Holy Prophet ﷺ prohibited the offering of '*Atirah*. In a tradition of Sayyidna Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه , reported by both al-Bukhari and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

لا فَرَعَ ولا عَتِيرَةَ

Fara' is nothing and '*Atirah* is nothing.

Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه, has explained in the same tradition that '*Fara'*' was the first child of a she-camel. Whenever a she-camel delivered its first child, the Arabs used to sacrifice it in the name of their so-called gods, while the '*Atirah*' was a goat used to be sacrificed in the month of Rajab. since the Holy Prophet ﷺ stopped both these customs, '*Atirah* is no longer a recognized practice.

'*Umrah* in the month of Rajab

Ibn 'Abidîn, the well-known scholar of the Islamic jurisprudence, has mentioned that the people of Mak-

kah (in his days) used to perform *'umrah* in the month of Rajab. Perhaps they believed that performing *'umrah* in this month is more meritorious than in other months. Then Ibn 'Âbidîn himself has rejected the authenticity of this practice, because no tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is found to this effect. Conversely Sayyidah 'Aishah رضی اللہ عنہا has expressly negated the presumption by saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ never performed an *'umrah* in the month of Rajab (Sahîh Muslim 1:409)

However, Ibn 'Âbidîn has quoted a narration that 'Abdullah ibn Zubair رضی اللہ عنہ completed the renovation of Ka'bah shortly before 27th of Rajab, and as a sign of gratefulness he performed *'umrah* and slaughtered some animals. But this report cannot form the basis of a recognized annual practice, firstly because the report is not very authentic, and secondly because it does not mention that Abdullah ibn Zubair رضی اللہ عنہ had adopted it as a continuing practice. At the most, he performed *'umrah* once as a sign of gratefulness on the completion of Ka'bah. It does not mean that he performed it as a characteristic of the month of Rajab.

Therefore, performing *'Umrah* in this month is like performing it in any other month and no special merit can be attached to it merely because it has been performed in the month of Rajab.

The *Salah* of "*Ragha'ib*'

Another special mode of worship attributed by

some people to this month is the *Salah* of *Raghai'b*. According to the custom of such people, this *Salah* is performed in the night of first Friday of the month of Rajab. The *Salah* of *Raghaib* is said to consist of twelve *rak'ats* to be performed in pairs with six *salâms*, and in each *rak'at the* surah al-qadr is recited three times followed by the *Surah-al-ikhlâs*.

This type of *Salah* is also not based on any sound source of Shari'ah. Therefore, almost all the jurists and scholars of Shari'ah have held that the *Salah* of *Raghaib* is a baseless practice and it is not permissible as a recognized practice of this month. It is true that there is a tradition, narrated by Razîn, the author of a book of *hadith*, which attributes the origin of this practice to the Holy Prophet ﷺ but almost all the scholars of the science of *hadith* have held it to be absolutely unauthentic. Therefore, no importance can be attached to it.

Distribution of Breads:

Another baseless practice in the month of Rajab is that the people bake special types of breads and, after reciting some verses and prayers on them, distribute them among their friends and neighbours. This custom has two different shapes.

1). In some communities, this custom is celebrated on 17th of Rajab on the assumption that Sayyidna Ali رضی اللہ عنہ was born on 11th of Rajab and the 17th of

Rajab is the day on which his *'Aquiqa* (Shaving of his head) was performed. In order to celebrate this happy event, the breads of some special type are prepared and after reciting Surah Almulk on them, they are distributed among the relatives and friends. These breads are generally called "breads of *Tabarak*" because Surah Almulk is usually recited on them.

This practice is baseless because it is never proved that Sayyidna Ali رضی اللہ عنہ was born on 11th of Rajab or that his *Aquiqa* was performed on 17th of this month and, as explained earlier, even if these events are proved to have happened in those days, their commemoration through these specific rituals is not warranted by the Shari'ah.

2). A more common practice of this type is observed on 22nd of Rajab whereby some breads and meals of a special type are prepared and distributed among the people. Since these special meals are usually placed in some bowls made of clay, the custom is usually known as "*Koonda*", an Urdu equivalent of such bowls. It is usually believed that the custom is designed to make *'isâl-al-thawâb* to the soul of Sayyidna Jafar Al-Sadiq who himself has directed his followers to observe this custom and has promised them that whoever observes it, his desires will be fulfilled.

All these assumptions also have no basis at all, neither historically, nor according to the principles of Shari'ah. In fact, the date of 22nd of Rajab has no con-

cern whatsoever with Sayyidnâ Jafar al-Sadiq رحمه الله. According to the historians, he was born on 8th of Ramadân 80 A.H. and died in Shawwâl 148 A.H. No specific event of the life of Sayyidna Jafar al-Sadiq is proved to have happened on this date.

The people believing in the custom refer to a coined story mentioned in an unauthentic book named "*Dastaan-e-Ajeeb*".

Briefly stated, the gist of the story is that a poor woodcutter lived in Madinah in the days of Jafar Al-Sadiq. He went abroad to earn his livelihood. His wife was employed in the house of the Prime Minister. Once she was cleaning the courtyard of the Prime Minister when Sayyidna Jafar al-Sadiq passed by her. It was 22nd of Rajab. He advised her to bake some breads of a special type and make *'isal-al-sawab* to him. According to this story, he promised her that if her desire is not fulfilled after this practice, she can catch hold of him at the doom's day. On hearing this, the woman made a vow that if her husband will come back with a considerable wealth, she will observe the custome of "*Koonda*". On the same day her husband, who was in another country, found a valuable treasure in the earth and came back with it to Madinah where he established himself as a rich man and started living in a magnificent castle. When his wife told the story to the wife of the Prime Minister, she disbelieved her and because of this disbelief, she and her hus-

band, the Prime Minister, were punished by Allah. He was removed by the king from the prime ministership and was imprisoned in a jail and was ordered to be hanged. While being in the prison, the wife of the Prime Minister remembered that she had disbelieved the story of Jafar al-Sadiq told to her by her maid-servant and their misery might be the punishment of their disbelief. On this point, she and her husband repented before Allah and made a vow to observe the custom of "*Koonda*", if they are released from the jail. After they made such a vow, the whole scenario of the events changed suddenly. The king released the Prime Minister from the jail and reinstated him on his former position.

As it can be seen by any reasonable person, this story is totally forged on the face of it. The person who has coined this story did not even know that Madinah had never a king nor a Prime Minister. All the Muslim rulers were named as caliphs and had no Prime Minister at all. In the days of Umayyas, their capital was Damascus and in the days of Abbasis, their permanent seat was in Baghdad.

It is ironical that the story of such a woodcutter is not even known to anybody in Madinah nor in any city of the Arab countries. No Arabic book has ever referred to it. It has no mention except in an Urdu book '*Dastaan-e-Ajeeb*', the author of which is unknown. One can easily see that a custom based on such a fal-

lacious and mythical story can never be an Islamic custom. Islam has always been far away from such superstitions.

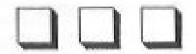
Therefore, this baseless custom should completely be avoided by the true Muslims. Some historians have opined that in fact, this custom has been coined by some Shi'ites because the date of 22nd of Rajab is the date of the demise of Sayyidna Mu'awiyah whom they take as their biggest enemy. They took that date as a happy occasion and made the Sunni Muslims also to celebrate it on the pretext of the above mentioned story.

Be that as it may, it is evident that such customs have crept into the Muslim society by their long association with Hindus who commemorate different historical events of their religion in the like manner. The Muslims must be careful about these customs, because they are not only an invention of ignorance but also the imitation of non-Muslims in their religious rituals. No doubt the "*Isal-al-thawab*' to the soul of a deceased Muslim, and particularly to a pious person is not only permissible but also a commendable practice but the Shari'ah has not prescribed a particular date, nor a particular mode to do so. If someone wants to make "*Isal-al-thawab*" to Sayyidna 'Ali رضی الله عنه, or to Ja'far-al-Sadiq رحمه الله , he can do it any day & by performing any act of worship, like *Salah*, fast, *Sadaqah*, *dhikr* etc. There is no reason why it should be restricted to a

special type of meal or bread distributed in a particular date. What makes this practice worse is the fact that the people accustomed to this practice deem it as necessary as a *fard* (obligation); rather they treat it as more necessary than *fard* because they do not care to perform the obligatory *salah* or to fulfill the rights of men obligated on them, but they are very strict and punctual to perform these activities. Moreover, if a person does not observe this practice, they reproach him and call him with bad names. Such behavior makes this custom a *bid'ah* which is condemned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a misguidance. Therefore, the Muslims must abandon all such practices and should not cling to it only because it has been the practice of their society for many years. A Muslim is supposed to follow the dictates of Shari'ah and not the practice of the society, if it violates any of its principles.

Conclusion

The upshot of the above discussion is that the Shari'ah has not prescribed any specific way to observe the month of Rajab or to perform a specific mode of worship or a ritual in any one of its dates. However, being a prologue to the month of Ramadân, it should be availed of for preparing oneself for Ramadân and one should pray Allah to make him reach the blessed month and to benefit from its unique merits.



The Month of SHA'BAN

The month of Sha'ban is one of the meritorious months for which we find some peculiar instructions in the sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It is reported in the authentic *ahadith* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to fast most of the month in Sha'ban. These fasts were not obligatory on him but Sha'ban is the month immediately preceding the month of Ramadan. Therefore, some preparatory measures are suggested by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his oral instructions and his practice. Some of these are given below:

1. The blessed Companion Anas رضی الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked,

> "Which fast is the most meritorious after the fasts of Ramadan?" He replied, "Fasts of Sha'ban in honour of Ramadan." [1]

2. The blessed Companion Usama ibn Zaid رضی الله عنه reports that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ :

> "Messenger of Allah, I have seen you fasting in

1. رواه الترمذی وقال حدیث غریب

the month of Sha'ban so frequently that I have never seen you fasting in any other month."

The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied:

"That (Sha'ban) is a month between Rajab and Ramadan which is neglected by many people. And it is a month in which an account of the deeds (of human beings) is presented before the Lord of the universe. so, I wish that my deeds be presented at a time when I am in a state of fasting." [1]

3. Ummul Mu'mineen 'Aishah رضی اللہ عنہا says,

"The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to fast in the whole of Sha'ban. I said to him, 'Messenger of Allah, is the month of Sha'ban your most favourite month to fast?' He said, 'In this month Allah prescribes the list of the persons dying this year. Therefore, I like that my death comes when I am in a state of fasting." [2]

4. In another Tradition she says,

"The Holy Prophet ﷺ would sometimes begin to fast continuously until we thought he would not stop fasting, and sometimes he used to stop fasting until we thought he would never fast. I never saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fasting a complete month, except the month of Ramadan, and I have never seen him fasting in a month more frequently than he did in Sha'ban" [3]

5. In another report she says,

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1. سنن النسائی
2. رواہ أبو یعلی وإسنادہ حسن (الترغیب والترھیب ص ۲٤۰ ج ۲)
3. صحیح البخاری و صحیح مسلم

"I never saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fasting in a month so profusely as he did in the month of Sha'ban. He used to fast in that month leaving only a few days, rather, he used to fast almost the whole of the month." [1]

6. Ummul-Mu'mineen Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها says:

"I have never seen the Messenger of Allah fasting for two months continously except in the months of Sha'ban and Ramadan." [2]

These reports indicate that fasting in the month of Sha'ban, though not obligatory, is so meritorious that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not like to miss it.

But it should be kept in mind that the fasts of Sha'ban are for those persons only who are capable of keeping them without causing deficiency in the obligatory fasts of Ramadan. Therefore, if one fears that after fasting in Sha'ban, he will lose strength or freshness for the fasts of Ramadan and will not be able to fast in it with freshness, he should not fast in the month of Sha'ban, because the fasts of Ramadan, being obligatory, are more important than the optional fasts of Sha'ban. That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has forbidden the Muslims from fasting one or two days immediately before the commencement of Ramadan. The blessed Companion Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه, reports the Holy Prophet ﷺ to have said,

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1. جامع الترمذی

2. جامع الترمذی وقال حدیث حسن

> "Do not fast after the first half of the month of Sha'ban has gone." [1]

According to another report the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

> "Do not precede the month of Ramadan with one or two fasts" [2]

The gist of the above-quoted *ahâdith* is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself used to fast most of the month of sha'ban, because he had no apprehension of weakness or weariness before the commencement of Ramadan. As for others, he ordered them not to fast after the 15th of Sha'ban for the fear that they would lose their strength and freshness before Ramadan starts, and would not be able to welcome the month of Ramadan with enthusiasm.

The Night of bara'ah

Another peculiar feature of the month of Sha'ban is that it consists of a night which is termed in Shari'ah as "*Laylatul-bara'ah*" (The night of freedom from Fire). This is the night occuring between 14th and 15th day of of Sha'ban. Ther are certain Traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to prove that it is a meritorious night in which the people of the earth are attended by special divine mercy. some of these Traditions are quoted as follows:

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1. أخرجه أبو داود في الصوم رقم ٢٣٢٧ باب كراهية من يصل شعبان برمضان
2. أخرجه البخاري في الصوم باب لا يتقدم رمضان بصوم يوم ولا يومين

1. Ummul-Mu'mineen 'Aishah رضى الله عنها is reported to have said,

> "Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ performed the salah of the night (Tahajjud) and made a very long Sajdah until I feared that he has passed away. When I saw this, I rose (from my bed) and moved his thumb (to ascertain whether he is alive). The thumb moved, and I returned (to my place). Then I heard him saying in Sajdah.
>
> أَعُوذُ بِعَفْوِكَ مِنْ عِقَابِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخَطِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ إِلَيْكَ لَا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ ، أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ
>
> 'I seek refuge of Your forgiveness from Your punishment, and I seek refuge of Your pleasure from Your annoyance, and I seek Your refuge from Yourself. I cannot praise You as fully as You deserve. You are exactly as You have defined Yourself.'

Thereafter, when he raised his head from *Sajdah* and finished his *salah,* he said to me: "Aishah, did you think that the Prophet has betrayed you?" I said, "No, O prophet of Allah, but I apprehended that your soul has been taken away because your *Sajdah* was very long." He asked me. "Do you know which night is this?" I said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "This is the night of the half of Sha'ban. Allah Almightly looks upon His slaves in this night and forgives those who seek forgivenes and bestows His mercy upon those who pray for mercy but keeps those who

have malice (against a Muslim) as they wer before," (and does not forgive them unlss they relieve themselves from malice). [1]

2. In another Tradition Sayyidah 'Aishah رضى الله عنها has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said,

> "Allah Almightly descends (in a manner He best knows it) in the night occuring in the middle of Sha'ban and forgives a large number of people more than the number of the fibres on the sheep of the tribe, Kalb." [2]

Kalb was a big tribe the members of which had avery large number of sheep. Therefore, the last sentence of the *hadith* indicates the big number of the people who are forgiven in this night by Allah Almighty.

3. In yet another Tradition, she has reported the Holy Propet صلى الله عليه وسلم to have said,

> "This is the middle Night of Sha'ban. Allah frees in it a large number of the people from Fire, more than the number of the hair growing on the sheep of the tribe, Kalb. But He does not even look at a person who associates partners with Allah, or at a person who nourishes malice in his heart (against someone), or at a person who cuts off the ties of womb-relations, or at a man who leaves his clothes extending beyond his ankles (as a sign of pride), or at a person

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1. رواه البيهقى، وقال: هذا مرسل جيد (الترغيب والترهيب للمنذرى ص ٢٣٢ ج ٢)
2. جامع الترمذى، كتاب الصوم حديث ٧٣٩

> who disobeys his parents, or at a person who has a habit of drinking wine."[1]

4. Sayyidna Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

> "Allah Almighty looks upon all those created by him in the middle Night of Sha'ban and forgives all those created by Him, except the one who associates partners with Him or the one who has malice in his heart (against a Muslim)".[2]

Although the chain of narrators of some of these Traditions suffrs with some minor technical defects, yet when all these traditions are combined together, it becomes clear that this night has some merits peculiar to it, and observing this night as a sacred night is not a baseless concoction as envisaged by some modern scholars who, on the basis of these minor defects, have totally rejected to give any special importance to this night. In fact, some of these Traditions have been held by some scholars of *hadith* as authentic and the defects in the chain of some others have been treated by them as minor technical defects which, according to the science of *hadith,* are curable by the variety of their ways of narration.

That is why the elders of the *ummah* have constantly been observing this night as a night of special merits and have been spending it in worship and

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1. رواه البیهقی (الترغیب والترهیب ص ٢٤١ ج ٢)
2. رواه الطبرانی وابن حبان فی صحیحه (الترغیب، أیضا)

prayers.

What should be done in this night?

In order to observe the Night of Bara'ah, one should remain awakened in this night as much as he can. If someone has better opportunities, he should spend the whole night in worship and prayer. However, if one cannot do so for one reason or another, he can select a considerable portion of the night, preferably of the second half of it for this purpose, and should perform the follwing acts of worship:

(a) ***Salah:*** *Salah* is the most preferable act to be performed in this night. There is no particular number of *Rak'at* but preferably it should not be less than eight. It is also advisable that each part of the *salah* like *qiyam, rukoo'* and *sajdah* should be longer than normal. The longest surahs of the Holy Qur'an one remembers by heart should be recited in the *salah* of this night. If someone does not remember the long surahs, he can also recite several short surahs in one *rak'ah*.

(b) The recitation of the Holy Qur'an is another form of worship, very beneficent in this night. After performing *Salah*, or at any other time, one should recite as much of the Holy Qur'an as he can.

(c) One should also perform *dhikr* (recitation of the name of Allah) in this night. Particularly the following *dhikr* is very useful:

سُبْحَانَ اللهِ وَالْحَمْدُلِلّٰهِ وَلَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللهُ وَاللهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيْمِ

One should recite *Salah (durood)* on the Holy Prophet ﷺ as many times as he can.

The *dhikr* can also be recited while walking, lying on bed and during other hours of work or leisure.

(d) The best benefit one can draw from the blessings of this night is prayers and supplications. It is hoped that all the prayers in this night will be accepted by our Lord, *inshallah.* Prayer itself is an *'ibadah*, and Allah Almighty gives reward on each prayer alongwith the fulfilment of the supplicator's need. Even if the purpose prayed for is not achieved, one cannot be deprived of the reward of the prayer which is sometimes more precious than the mundane benefits he strives for. The prayers and supplications also strengthen one's relation with Allah Almighy which is the main purpose of all kinds and forms of worship.

One can pray for whatever purpose he wishes. But the best supplications are the ones prayed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . These are so comprehensive and all-encompassing prayers that all the human needs, both of this world and of the Hereafter, are fully covered in the eloquent expressions used in them. Rather, most of the prophetic prayers are of such miraculous nature that human imagination can hardly reach the magni-

tude of their perception.

Several books in various languages are available which provide these prophetic prayers, and one should pray Allah Almighty in accordance with them, whether by reciting their original Arabic text or by rendering their sense in one's own language.

(e) There are some people who cannot perform any additional *Salah* or recitations for any reason, like illness or weakness or being engaged in some other necessary activities. Such people also should not leave themselves devoid of the blessings of this night. They should observe the following acts:

(i) To perform the *salah* of *maghrib, 'isha' and fajr* with *jama'ah* in the mosque, or in their homes in case of their being sick.

(ii) They should keep reciting the *dhikr*, particularly the one mentioned in para (c) above, in whatever condition they are until they sleep.

(iii) They should pray Allah for their forgiveness and for their other objectives. One can do so even when he is in his bed.

(f) The women during their periods cannot perform *salah*, nor can they recite the Holy Qur'an, but they can recite any *dhikr, tasbeeh durood sharif* and can pray Allah for whatever purpose they like in whatever language they wish. They can also recite the

Arabic prayers mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the *hadith* with the intention of supplication (and not with the intention of recitation).

(g) According to a *hadith,* which is relatively less authentic, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went in this night to the graveyard of Baqi' where he prayed for the Muslims buried there. On this basis, some of the *fuqaha* hold it as *mustahabb* (advisable) in this night to go to the graveyard of the Muslims and recite *Fatihah* or any other part of the Holy Qur'an, and pray for the dead. But this act is neither obligatory nor should it be performed as regularly as an obligatory act.

What should not be done in this night

1. As mentioned earlier, the *Night* of *Bara'ah* is a night in which special blessings are directed towards the Muslims. Therefore, this night should be spent in total submission to Allah Almighty, and one should refrain from all those activities which may displease Allah. Although it is always incumbent upon every Muslim to abstain from sins, yet this abstinence becomes all the more necessary in such nights, because committing sins in this night will amount to responding to divine blessings with disobedience and felony. Such an arrogant attitude can invite nothing but the wrath of Allah. Therefore, one should strictly abstain from all the sins, particularly from those mentioned in the Hadith No. 3 quoted earlier in this article, because these sins make one devoid of the blessings of this night.

2. In this night some people indulge in some activities which they regard as necessary for the celeberation of the Night of Bara'ah, like cooking some special type of meal, or illuminating houses or mosques, or improvised structures.

All such activities are not only baseless and innovated in the later days by ignorant people, but in some cases they are pure imitation of some rituals performed by non-Muslim communities. Such imitation in itself is a sin, let alone to perform it in a blessed night like the Night of Bara'ah. The Muslims should strictly abstain from all such activities.

3. Some people spend this night in holding religious meetings and delivering long speeches. Such activities are also not advisable, because these acts can easily be performed in other nights also. This night requires one to spare himself for the pure acts of worship only.

4. The acts of worship like *Salah*, recitation of the Holy Qur'an and *dhikr* should be performed in this night individually, not collectively. The *Nafl Salah* should not be performed in *Jama'ah*, nor should the Muslims arrange gatherings in the mosques in order to celebrate the night in a collective manner.

On the contrary, this night is meant for worshipping Allah in solitude. It is the time to enjoy the direct contact with the Lord of the Universe, and to devote

one's attention to Him and Him alone. These are the percious hours of the night in which nobody should intervene between one and his Lord, and one should turn to Allah with total concentration, not disturbed or intermitted by any one else.

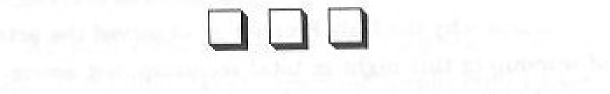
That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ observed the acts of worship in this night in total seclusion, not accompained by anyone, not even by his favourite life companion Sayyidah 'Aishah رضی الله عنها, and that is why all forms of the optional worship (*Nafl 'ibadah*), are advised by him to be done in individual, not in collective manner.

Fast of the 15th Sha'ban

On the day immediately following the Night of Bara'ah, i.e. the 15th of Sha'ban, it is *mustahabb* (advisable) to keep fast. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have recommended this fast emphatically.[1] Although the scholars of *hadith* have some doubts in the authenticity of this report, yet it is mentioned earlier that the fasts of the first half of Sha'ban have special merits and the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to fast most of the days in Sha'ban. Moreover, a large number of the elders (*salaf*) of the *Ummah* have been observing the fast of the 15th Sha'ban. This constant practice indicates that they have accepted the relevant hadith as authentic.

1. الترغيب والترهيب للمنذری ص ۲٤۲ و ۲٤۳ ج ۲ عن ابن ماجه

Therefore, it is advisable to fast the 15th of sha'ban as an optional (*nafl*) fast. One can also keep a fast of *qada'* on this day and it is hoped that he can also benefit himself from the merits of this fast.



The Month of RÂMADÂN

The ninth month of the Islamic calender is called "Ramadân" and it is the most meritorious month of the whole year. Since there are many specific rules peculiar to this month, we would like to deal with its characteristics in a rather detailed manner under different sections.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RAMADÂN

The Holy Qur'an has expressly told us that the basic objective for which man is created by Allah is that he "worships" Him:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

> And I did not create Jinn and human beings except that they should worship Me. (______)

The word used by the Holy Qur'an for the worship is "*ibâdah*" which has a much wider sense than "worship". In English, the word "worship" normally indicates to some specific acts or rituals meant exclusively to show one's reverence to his Creator. But the

word "*ibâdah*' is not restricted to such acts or rituals, rather, it embodies any act done in submission to Allah's commands and to seek His pleasures. Therefore, many acts which seem to be mundane in nature are included in the word of '*ibâdah*' like earning one's livelihood through *halâl* (permissible) means and in order to fulfill one's obligations towards his dependants.

However, '*ibâdah*' is of two kinds. At the first place there are acts meant exclusively to worship Allah, having no worldly objective, like *Salah,* fasting etc. These are direct acts of '*ibâdah*' while the other kind of '*ibâdah*' includes the acts which are primarily mundane, but they are converted into an '*ibâdah*' when they are performed in full conformity with Shari'ah and with an intention to discharge one's obligations. Therefore, these acts are treated as "*ibâdah*' in an indirect manner. It is obvious that the direct acts of "*ibâdah*' should be superior to the indirect ones.

Now, while prescribing very few acts of direct '*ibâdah* in one's daily life, like the *salah* which is performed five times a day, Islam has left its followers mostly with the indirect acts of '*ibâdah* like eating, drinking, earning the livelihood and association with one's wife, children, parents, relatives, friends and other human beings. But the primary nature of these acts being mundane, one becomes so absorbed in their worldly pleasures that their material aspects prevail on their spiritual aspect. Therefore, these acts have

less spiritual strength than the direct acts of worship.

Since the direct acts of *'ibâdah* are very few in one's daily life as compared to the indirect ones, his spiritual progress becomes slow *visa vis* his material progress. The month of Ramadân has been designed to maintain a balance between material and spiritual aspects of the human life. This month is meant to maximize the direct acts of *'ibâdah* and to minimize the pure mundane activities, so that one may accelerate his spiritual progress to make up the distance and to repair the spiritual loss one may have suffered through his deep involvement in the mundane activities during the year. The days of Ramadân are designed to keep fast which is an act of *'ibâdah* for the whole day, and depriving oneself from any material food for many hours, it lessens the bad spiritual effects, if any, of the material pleasures. The nights of Ramadân, on the other hand, are spent in offering *Tarawîh* and waking up for *tahajjud* and *suhûr*, reducing the time of one's sleep much less than in the normal days. Moreover, apart from the prescribed acts of worship, one is supposed to offer as much optional (*nafl*) *'ibâdah* in this month as he can. In this way the level of one's spiritual activities in this month is raised up much higher than in other days of the year.

This philosophy of the month of Ramadân makes it clear that this month should be devoted to the direct acts of worship as far as possible. That is why the re-

ward of the virtuous acts in this month has been multiplied. This is to encourage the Muslims to the maximum possible acts of *'ibâdah*.

THE MERITS OF RAMADÂN

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has mentioned the merits of Ramadân in a large number of *ahadith*. Some of them are reproduced here with translation:

عن سلمان رضى الله عنه قال: خطبنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فى آخر يوم من شعبان فقال: يا ايّها الناس: قدأظلكم شهر عظيم مبارك فيه ليلة خير من ألف شهر، جعل الله صيامه فريضة وقيام ليله تطوعا من تقرب فيه بخصلة كان كمن ادّى فريضة فيما سواه، ومن ادّى فريضة فيه كان كمن ادّى سبعين فريضة فيما سواه، وهو شهر الصبر، والصّبر ثوابه الجنّة، وشهر المواساة، وشهر يزادفيه رزق المؤمن، من فطّر فيه صائما كان مغفرة لذنوبه وعتق رقبته من النار وكان له مثل اجره، من غير ان ينقص من اجره شيئ، قالوا: يا رسول الله ! ليس كلّنا يجد ما يفطّر به الصائم، فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يعطى الله هذا الثواب من فطّر صائما على تمرة اوشربة ماء ، أومذقة لبن. وهو شهر

أوله رحمة، واوسطه مغفرة، وآخره عتق من النار . واستكثروا فيه من اربع خصال: خصلتين تُرضون بهما ربكم، وخصلتين لاغناءبكم عنهما. فأما الخصلتان اللتان تُرضون بهماربكم، فشهادة أن لا إله إلا الله، وتستغفرونه وأما الخصلتان اللتان لاغناءبكم عنهما، فتسئلون الله الجنّة وتعوذون به من النار. ومن سقى صائما سقاه الله من حوضى شربة لا يظمأ حتى يدخل الجنّة (رواه ابن خزيمة فى صحيحه والبيهقى وغيرهما) (الترغيب والترهيب للمنذرى ص ٢٠٣)

Salmân, the Persian رضى الله عنه has reported the following: "The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم addressed us on the last day of Sha'bân wherein he said:

"O men, a great, blessed month has cast its shadow upon you. It is a month which contains a night far better than one thousand months, a month Allah has made it obligatory to fast therein and made it commendable to stand up praying in its nights. If someone seeks Allah's nearness by offering an optional act of worship in this month, it will be as rewarding as to offer an obligatory worship in other days, and if someone performs an obligatory act of worship in this month, it will carry as much reward as the reward of performing seventy obligatory acts of worship in other days. It is the

month of patience and the reward of patience is Jannah (paradise) It is a month of sympathy, a month in which the provision for a believer is increased. If someone provides another person with food to make Iftâr (terminate one's fast by eating or drinking something) it will cause forgiveness to his sins and freeing his neck from hell and he will be awarded the same thawâb as the fasting person will be rewarded for his fast, without decreasing his own thawâb.

The companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "O Messenger of Allah, every one of us does not have enough food to offer for iftâr to another fasting person." The Holy Prophet ~ said, "This thawâb will also be given to a person who offers to a fasting person one date or a drink of water or a little milk for his iftâr. And this is a month the first part of which is mercy from Allah, the middle of which is the forgiveness from Allah and the last part of which is liberation from hell. If someone relaxes the burden of work from his slave in this month, Allah will forgive him his sins and will free him from the Fire. In this month you should do four acts frequently. Two acts are such that you will please your Lord through them and two are such that you can never claim to be need-free of them. As for the two acts you please Allah through them, they are: to bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and to seek forgiveness from Allah. And the two acts you can never

> be need-free of them are: to pray Allah to give you the Jannah (the Paradise) and to seek refuge to Allah from the Fire. And if someone serves a drink to a fasting person, Allah will make him have such a drink from my canal (the Kauthar) that he will never get thirsty after it until he enters the Jannah."

This *hadith* gives us a detailed account of the peculiar merits of the month of Ramadan and of what we should try to do in it. The upshot of the *hadith* is that one should not restrict himself to fasting in this month; rather he should maximise the number of his virtuous acts and take this opportunity to seek forgiveness for his sins and to secure as much *thawâb* as he can, by offering the *nafl* acts of worship including charitable acts.

In another *hadith,* reported by Abû Hurairah رضى الله عنه the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

> خمس خصال فى رمضان لم تعطهنّ أمة قبلهم:
> خَلوف فم الصّـــائم اطيب عند الله من ريح
> المسك ، وتستغفرلهم الحيتان حتى يفطروا،
> ويزين الله عـزّوجل كل يوم جنتـه ثم يقـول:
> يوشك عبادى الصالحون أن يلقوا عنهم المؤونة
> وليصيروا إليك، وتصفّد فيه مردة الشياطين،
> فلا يخلصوا فيه إلى ماكانوا يخلصون إليه فى

غيره، وليغفرلهم فى آخر ليلة (رواه احمد والبزا
روالبهقى، كما فى الترغيب)

My *Ummah* has been given five characteristic honours in the month of Ramadân which have not been given to any other *ummah* before.

1. The smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better with Allah than the smell of musk.

2. fishes (in the water) keep praying Allah to forgive the fasting persons until they make *iftar*.

3. In every day of Ramadân, Allah decorates the *Jannah* and addresses it saying" 'It is not too far that my righteous servants shall throw away the burdens (of the worldly life) and shall proceed towards you.

4. The rebellious satans are shackled in this month, and they cannot do in it what they do in other days (i.e. instigating men and women to commit sins.)

5. In the last night of this month, they (the fasting persons) are granted amnesty.

In a *hadith* narrated by 'Ubâdah ibn al Sâmit, رضى الله عنه the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said:

اتاكم رمضان، شهر بركة يغشاكم الله فيه
فينزل الرحمة ويحط الخطايا يستجيب فيه
الدعاء ينظر الله تعالى الى تنافسكم فيه،

ويباهي بكم ملائكته فأروا الله من انفسكم خيرا، فان الشقيَّ من حرم فيه رحمة الله عزوجل

> Ramadân has come to you. It is the month of blessing in which Allah envelops you (with His kindness) He makes His mercy descend upon you, He forgives your sins and accepts your prayers. Allah witnesses you when you race one another (in virtuous deeds) in this month and becomes proud of you before His angels. Therefore, show Allah the best of deeds from your side, because unfortunate is that person who deprives himself from Allah's mercy in this month.

These *ahadith* are sufficient to explain the great merits Allah has invested this month with.

HOW TO SPEND RAMADÂN

The month of Ramadan is the season of divine blessings. It is the month of purification. it is meant for annual renovation of the inner spiritual qualities. It is a golden opportunity for every Muslim to strengthen his *'Iman*, to purify his heart and soul and to remove the evil effects of the sins committed by him.

This month invites a Muslim to minimize his other mundane involvements and maximize the acts of worship. One should plan his schedule for this month, before-hand, so as to spare maximum time for *'ibadah*.

Here is a brief list of the acts which should be carried out in Ramadan with due care:

1. To offer every prayer with *jama'ah* in a *masjid*.

2. To rise up a little earlier than the exact time of *suhoor* and to offer the *salah* of *tahajjud*. There is no prescribed number of the *Tahajjud* prayer. Yet, it is better to pray 8 *Rak'at*.

3. To offer the *nafl* prayers of *Ishraq* (two *rak'at* after sunrise) *Duha* (Four *rak'at* which may be performed at anytime after *Ishraq* before noon) and *Awwabin* (six *rak'at* after *maghrib*).

4. The recitation of the Holy Qur'an. No specific limit is prescribed. But one should recite as much of it as he can.

5. *Dhikr* or *Tasbeeh*, specially the following recitations:

(a) سبحان الله وبحمده سبحان الله العظيم

(b) سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا إله إلا الله والله أكبر

(c) أستغفر الله ربّي من كل ذنب وأتوب إليه

(d) اللهم صلّ على محمد النبي الأمّي وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم

(e) لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العليّ العظيم

Apart from reciting these words, one hundred times each, at a particular time, they may also be continued frequently throughout the day; even if one is engaged in some light work, when walking and when

in bed.

6. Prayers and supplications: No particular prayer is prescribed. One can pray for everything he needs both in this world and in the Hereafter. However, the supplications of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are so comprehensive that they encompass all that a Muslim can need in his life and after his death. It is, therefore, much advisable to pray Allah Almighty in the prophetic words used by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

There are several books where these prophetic supplications have been compiled. Here is the name of two books which should be kept by every Muslim in his home and be used for praying daily:

(i) Al-hisnul-hasin الحصن الحصين By'Allamah al-jazri.

(ii) Munajat-e-Maqbool مناجات مقبول By Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi.

7. *Sadaqah* (charity): Apart from paying *zakah*, which is obligatory, one should also pay optional *sadaqah* in Ramadan according to his best ability. It is reported in authentic *ahadith* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to pay special attention in Ramadan to look after the poor and to help them financially. Therefore, a Muslim Should give as much money in *sadaqah* as he can afford.

WHAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED IN RAMADÂN

All sinful acts should be avoided completely dur-

ing the month of Ramadan. Although the sinful acts are totally prohibited in *Shariah*, whether in Ramadan or at any other time, but their prohibition becomes more severe in this month. It is evident that every Muslim avoids certain lawful acts, like eating and drinking, during the fasts. If he continues to commit sins in Ramadan, it will be a mockery to avoid lawful things and yet be engaged in unlawful acts never allowed in Shari'ah. Thus, the abstinence from sins be comes all the more necessary in this month.

Specially the following acts should be avoided totally:

(1) Telling a lie.

(2) *Gheebah* or backbiting i.e. condemnation of a person in his absence.

(3) Quarrelling.

(The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has particularly forbidden from it when one is in the state of fasting. He has directed us that, if someone wants to quarrel in Ramadan, we should tell him that we are fasting, hence we are not prepared to indulge in any quarrel.

(4) Eating unlawful things.

(5) Earning through unlawful means.

(6) Any act which may harm a person without a valid cause.

(7) Burdening one's servants or employees with a toilsome job beyond their ability, without providing them facilities to carry it out.

In short, one should try his best to refrain from all kinds of sins, and protect his eyes, ears, tongue and all other organs from indulging in an unlawful activity.

Once a Muslim spends the month of Ramadan in this way, he will *insha Allah*, find himself equipped with a spiritual strength which will facilitate for him to conduct a good Islamic life in accordance with the pleasure of Allah.

RULES OF FASTING

Fasting in the days of Ramadan is obligatory *(Fard)* on every Muslim. The one who does not believe it to be obligatory is not a Muslim, and the one who, without a valid excuse, does not fast in a day of Ramadan is a sinner.

"Fast" means "to refrain from eating, drinking and having sexual intercourse throughout the day, right from the break of dawn upto sunset, with a clear intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah." If somebody refrains from food, drink and sex for any reason other than seeking the pleasure of Allah, it cannot be called a "fast" in the terminology of the Shari'ah. It is thus necessary that there should be an intention which is called the "*Niyyah*".

For the fasts of Ramadan it is advisable that the

"*niyyah*" be made in the night i.e. before the commencement of the fast. However, if a person had no intention of keeping fast before dawn, he can also make "*niyyah*" in the morning at any time before midday, i.e. about 1 1/2 hours before *Zawal* (noon). But this rule is applicable only for the fast of Ramadan and for the *Nafl* (optional) fasts. As for fasts of *qada* it is always necessary to make *niyyah* before dawn.

Since the *niyyah* means intention, it is an act performed by one's heart. It need not be pronounced in words. However, it is also permissible to express this intention in spoken words, but those who take it as 'necessary' to pronounce the words of "*niyyah*" are not correct.

Acts nullifying the fast

Acts nullifying the fast are of two kinds. In the first place there are some acts which not only nullify the fast, but also make one liable to both *qada*' and *kaffarah*. The number of these acts is only three, namely:

(a) Eating something.

(b) Drinking something.

(c) Having sexual intercourse.

These three acts are liable to *kaffarah* when they are committed deliberately after one has started a fast, provided that the person committing them

knows that they render the fast broken.

In such cases both *qada'* and *kaffarah* are obligatory on him. *Qada'* means to keep another fast in lieu of the broken one. And *kaffarah* means to perform an act to expiate the sin of having broken the fast.

Kaffarah may be given in the following three ways respectively:

(a) Freeing a slave.

(b) Fasting for two months constantly without a break.

(c) Giving food to sixty persons.

Since slavery has come to an end in our days, only the latter two ways can be adopted today. But the person who has strength enough to fast for two months constantly has been bound to fast. He cannot adopt the third way, i.e. giving food to sixty persons. If he is too weak to fast for such a large number of days, he can give *kaffarah* by giving food to sixty persons.

In the second place there are some acts which nullify the fast, but do not make the relevant person liable to *kaffarah*. In such cases only *qada'* is obligatory. These acts are:

(i) Eating or drinking unintentionally. For example, while making *wudu*, if a drop of water slips into the throat unintentionally, the fast stands broken, but only the *qada'* will be enough to compensate for the

mistake.

(ii) Dropping medicine or anything else in the nose or the ear.

(iii) Smoking.

(iv) Emission of semen while touching, kissing or caressing a woman.

(v) Eating or drinking under the wrong impression that the dawn has not yet broken, or the sun has set, while otherwise was true.

(vi) If someone eats or drinks while he does not remember that he is in a state of fasting, his fast is not broken. He should continue with his fast after he remembers. However, if he eats or drinks after he remembers, his fast will stand broken, and if this eating or drinking was due to his wrong impression that his fast stood broken by his first eating or drinking, he will be liable to *qada'* only.

Acts rendering the fast *makrooh*:

The following acts do not nullify the fast, but render it *makrooh* in the sense that they lessen the reward of the fast. Hence it is not advisable to indulge in any of the following acts when one is in the state of fast:

(i) Chewing something or tasting it with the tongue without eating it.

(ii) Using tooth paste or tooth powder. However,

cleaning teeth with a *miswak* or a brush (without paste or powder) is allowed.

(iii) Remaining in the state of *Janabah* (major impurity) for the whole day.

(iv) Giving blood to anyone.

(v) Quarrelling with someone or abusing him.

(vi) *Gheebah* i.e., to abuse or to blame someone in his absence.

(vii) Telling a lie.

The latter three acts are absolutely prohibited even when one is not in the state of fasting, but they become all the more prohibited when one keeps fast.

Acts which are allowed

The following acts are allowed in the state of fasting:

(i) Cleaning teeth using a *miswak* or a brush and ears with cotton swabs.

(ii) Applying oil or *henna* or colour to the hair.

(iii) Using eye-drops or *kohl* (*surma/kajal*).

(iv) Wearing perfume or feeling it, or using lipstick or chopstick.

(v) Taking a shower.

(vi) Using medicine through injection.

(vii) Vomiting unintentionally.

(viii) Entrance of smoke or dust into the throat unintentionally.

(ix) Ejaculation while dreaming.

(x) Bleeding from the teeth unless blood slips in to the throat.

(xi) Delaying the *ghusl* of *janabah* upto the sunrise.

Cases in which fasting is not obligatory

In the following cases it is allowed for a Muslim to avoid fasting in Ramadan and compensate it by fasting on some other days:

(i) If a person suffers from a disease which has rendered him unable to fast , or a competent doctor has expressed his apprehension that fasting may increase the disease, he can avoid fasting until when it is clear that fasting is no more injurious to his health. But after recovery he is under an obligation to perform *qada'* of all the fasts he has missed due to his sickness.

(ii) If a woman is pregnant, and it is seriously feared that fasting may harm her or her baby, she can postpone fasting in Ramadan and may fast after delivery as *qada'*.

(iii) If a woman breast-feeds her baby, and it is seriously feared that, in case she fasts, she cannot feed her baby or her fasting may harm her or her baby, she

can avoid fasting in Ramadan and perform *qada'*.

Fasting in journey

(iv) The one who travels to a distance of at least 48 miles from his hometown can also postpone fasting during his journey. But if he resolves to stay in a town for more than 14 days, he is not treated as a traveller for this purpose and he is obligated to fast in the days of Ramadan. However, if he has not made up his mind to stay in a place for more than 14 days, and he is doubtful whether he will stay for 14 days or less than that, he can also avail of the concession, unless he decides to stay for the prescribed period, i.e. more than 14 days. If he remained uncertain about his stay but stayed at a place for even more than 14 days in this state of uncertainty, he will remain entitled to this concession until he resolves positively to stay for another 15 days.

Although this concession is available to every traveller who leaves his hometown to a distance of at least 48 miles, yet if the journey is comfortable and fasting is not very burdensome on him, it is more advisable for him to fast for two reasons. Firstly, because such a traveller gets more *thawab* (reward) in case he fasts during his journey, and secondly, because if he avoids fasting while on travel, he will have to fast after Ramadan which can be more difficult for him.

But if the journey is a difficult one, and it is much

burdensome to fast in such a difficult journey, then, it is more advisable for him to avoid fasting, but if fasting seems to be nearly unbearable for him, it is not lawful to keep fast in such a journey.

If someone has started fasting, then he had to travel during the day, he cannot avail of the concession during that day, rather he will have to complete his fast unto the sunset. However, if his journey continues on to the next day, he can benefit from the concession the next day.

Conversely, if someone was on travel in the beginning of a day, and he did not keep fast for that reason and began to eat and drink but he reached his hometown during the day, he must avoid eating or drinking after reaching his hometown unto the sunset. This abstinence from eating and drinking will not be counted as a fast, and he will have to perform *qada'* of that day also, but he is directed to abstain from eating and drinking only to honour that part of the day of Ramadan which he has passed in his hometown.

(v) Fasting is prohibited for women during their monthly periods (menstruation) and during partition (i.e. normal bleeding after childbirth), but they have to perform *qada'* for the fasts they have missed in such a state.

(vi) Those who are allowed a concession (of not fasting) in Ramadan can eat and drink during the day,

but they should honour the days of Ramadan and should not eat or drink as far as possible at a public place or before other Muslims who are in the state of fasting.

Those who can break their fast during the day

It is major sin to break a fast during the day without a valid excuse. It makes one liable to *kaffarah* as explained earlier. However, there are situations where it becomes lawful to break a fast. These situations are as under:

Concession given to a sick person

(a) Where a person is attacked by a severe disease, and a competent doctor opines that, if he continues with his fast, it will bring a serious danger to his life. In such a situation breaking of the fast is not only allowed, but it is obligatory.

(b) A person feels such an extreme hunger or thirst that further abstinence from eating or drinking may endanger his life. In this situation also, breaking of the fast is obligatory.

(d) In any situation where refraining from eating or drinking may create a serious danger to one's life, it becomes lawful to break the fast.

In all these cases, the person breaking the fast is not liable to *kaffarah*, but he has to perform *qada'* whenever the danger is removed.

Suhoor or *Sehri*

'Suhoor' is the meal one takes in the last hours of the night before the commencement of a fast. It is a *Sunnah* to have *'Suhoor'*. If someone has no appetite at that time, it is advisable for him to have something light. Even by having a few sips of water the *sunnah* of *suhoor* can be fulfilled. Although the *'Suhoor'* can be had any time after midnight, but it is more advisable to have it in the last hour of the night immediately before the break of dawn.

The *'Suhoor'* can be continued upto the break of dawn. But in order to be on the safe side, it is advisable to refrain from eating or drinking a few minutes earlier than the break of dawn. Eating or drinking after the dawn even for a single minute renders the fast void.

If one is doubtful whether the dawn has broken or not, he should refrain from eating or drinking. However, if he eats or drinks in this state of uncertainty, his fast is valid unless it is proved later that he had eaten or drunk after the break of dawn, in which case, he will have to observe another fast.

Iftar

Iftar means to conclude a fast after sunset by eating or drinking something. It is also a *sunnah* to make *iftar* soon after sunset, and it is *makrooh* to delay *Iftar* after sunset without a valid excuse. However, if some-

one is doubtful whether the sun has set or not, he should not make *iftar* until he is sure about it, because if it is proved at any time that he had made *iftar* even half a minute earlier than the sunset actually took place on his horizon, his fast will be rendered nullified and void. Similarly, if the weather is cloudy, it is advisable to delay *iftar* for a few minutes after the time of sunset.

No particular meal is prescribed for *iftar* but it is advisable to make *iftar* using dates because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم generally used dates for *iftar*.

It is also *sunnah* to recite the following *du'a* (prayer) while making *iftar*:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَكَ صُمْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلٰى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ

> O' Allah, for you I have fasted, and in you I have believed and in You I have placed my trust and with Your provision I make my Iftar.

and after having and drinking water, it is advisable to say,

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ وَابْتَلَّتِ الْعُرُوْقُ وَثَبَتَ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللّٰهُ

> Thirst has gone; veins have become wet and the reward (of the fast) has, God willing, been established.

FAST OF *QADA'*

Whoever has missed a fast of Ramadan is liable to compensate it with fasting after Ramadan. This fast is called 'the fast of *Qada'*.

Fast of *qada'* may be observed any day during the year except for the following days:

(a) First of Shawwal (*Eidul-fitr*).

(b) Tenth of Zulhijjah (*Eidul-adha*).

(c) Eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth of Zulhijjah. On these days fasting is strictly prohibited. so the fast of *Qada'* cannot be observed on these days.

Fast of *qada'* should be observed as soon as possible after one has missed a fast of Ramadan. Delaying the performance of *qada'* without a valid reason is not desirable. If some one has missed more than one fast, he can perform *qada* for all of them continuously, or with intervals. But the fasts of *kaffarah* should necessarily be continuous - without any interval. Any interval makes the previous fasts nullified for the purpose of *kaffarah*, and one has to begin the fasts all over again.

Unlike the fast of Ramadan and optional (*Nafl*) fasts, in the fast of *Qada'* it is necessary to make *niyyah* before the dawn.

If a person has an obligation to keep a large number of the fasts of *qada'*, he should write down the ex-

act number of the fasts due on him. He should also make a will that if he could not fast in his life time, his heirs should pay *fidyah* (redemption from obligation not carried out) from his left over property. The amount of *fidyah* for one fast is one kilo and six hundred sixty two grams of wheat or its price. If the amount of *fidyah* can be paid from one-third property of a deceased person who has made a will to pay *fidyah*, the heirs are bound to pay it from his left over property. But if the deceased made no will to pay *fidyah*, the heirs are not bound to pay it from his property. Similarly, if the amount of *fidyah* exceeds one-third of the property left by the deceased, the heirs are not liable to pay the excess, unless they wish to do so by their free will.

TARAWIH

Another important feature of the month of Ramadan is *Tarawih*. It is a special *Salah* (prayer) consisting of 20 *rak'at* which is performed immediately after the *'Isha'* prayer. This *Salah* is *Sunnah mu'akkaddah* (repeatedly emphasized), and should not be missed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

> "Allah has made fasting in Ramadan obligatory, and I have made the special prayer of Ramadan (i.e. the *Tarawih*) a *Sunnah*".

It is a *Sunnah Mu'akkadah' 'alal-kifayah* to perform *Tarawih* in *jama'ah*. It means that it is a *Sunnah mu'akkadah* for the people of every mosque to arrange

for the *jama'at* of the *Tarawih*. If a person after being sure that the *jama'ah* of *Tarawih* is being held in his mosque, performs the *Tarawih* in his home without *jama'ah*, the *sunnah* of the *Tarawih* is discharged, but he will be deprived of the great *thawab* (reward) of praying with *jama'ah*. So, one should perform the *Tarawih* in the mosque as far as possible.

It is also a *Sunnah* to complete the recitation of the whole Quran in *Tarawih* in Ramadan. It is thus advisable to request a *hafiz* (one who has memorized the Holy Quran by heart) to lead the prayer of *Tarawih*. However, paying any fee to the *hafiz* for this purpose is not allowed. If no such *hafiz* is available, the *Tarawih* should be led by any Imam, and he can recite in it whatever Surahs of the Holy Qur'an he remembers.

As a general practice, the Holy Qur'an is completed in most of the mosques a few days before the end of Ramadan, on the 27th night or even earlier. In such a case, *Tarawih* should be continued till the last night of Ramadan with recitation of different surahs. Those who leave *Tarawih* after the completion of the Holy Qur'an are not correct, because *Sunnah* of the *Tarawih* remains unchanged unto the last night.

The time of *Tarawih* begins after the performance of the obligatory (*Fard*) prayer of *'Isha*. Therefore, the one who has not performed the *Fard* prayer of *'Isha*

cannot join the prayer of *Tarawih*. He should perform the *Fard* of *'Isha* first, then join the *Tarawih*. If he missed some *rak'at* of *Tarawih*, he can complete it after the *witr*. For example, a person came to the mosque when the Imam has performed four *rak'at* of *Tarawih*. He should perform the *Fard* of *'Isha* first, then join the *jama'ah* for *Tarawih*. If he has missed 4 or 6 *rak'at* of *Tarawih*, he should also perform the *witr* prayer with the Imam, then pray the four or six *rak'at* he has missed on his own, individually.

Laylatulqadr: ليلة القدر

One of the most meritorious aspects of the month of Ramadan is that it contains *Laylatulqadr*, the most blessed night of the year. It is the night which Allah Almighty chose to reveal the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned that this night is better than one thousand months. It means that the worship performed in this night brings more reward than the worship performed in one thousand months. The authentic Traditions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mention that, in this night, Allah Almighty directs His special mercy towards the people of the earth, accepts the supplications made by His slaves and forgives a large number of people who repent and pray.

Laylatulqadr falls in one of the last five odd nights of Ramadan i.e. 21st, 23rd 25th, 27th and 29th. According to authentic sources, *Laylatulqadr* falls in any one of these night alternately. The purpose of this al-

ternation is that one should spend all the five nights in worship and prayers, so that he may find *laylatul-qadr* with certainty.

No special form of worship is prescribed for *Laylatulqadr*. The night should be spent by offering as much *nafl* prayers as one can offer, in recitation of the Holy Qur'an, in *dhikr* and *Tasbeeh*, in supplications and in making *sadaqah* (charity).

It is not advisable in this night to hold ceremonies or meetings or delivering long lectures or illuminating the mosques. This is a night meant for developing a special connection with one's Creator, for offering acts of worship in solitude and seclusion, for having constant and exclusive contact with his Lord who is the Lord of the universe, for minimizing the diversity of thoughts and actions and for devoting oneself to Allah Almighty with his heart and soul.

This purpose can seldom be achieved in congregations and assemblies. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never tended to celebrate this night by lectures, meetings, illumination or even by offering prayers in *jama'ah*. Instead, he used to perform acts of worship individually, and in solitude.

Sayyidah 'Aishah رضي الله عنها once asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what *du'a* (supplication) she should recite in the *Laylatulqadr*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ taught her the following *du'a*:

اَللّٰهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌّ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّى

Allah, You are surely most forgiving and
You like forgiving. so, forgive me.

The best way to benefit from the blessings of this night is to keep awake for the whole night and spend it in worship and prayers. But people who cannot do so for any reason should spare at least a considerable part of the night for acts of worship. At least 8 *rak'at* should be prayed after midnight as *tahajjud*, some part from the Holy Qur'an should be recited and the supplications of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should be offered. Any *Dhikr* or *Tasbeeh* should be constantly recited, specially the following *dhikr* has numerous merits:

سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا إله إلا الله والله
أكبر ولا حَولَ ولا قوة إلا بالله العلى العظيم

Even when one is not in the state of *wudu*, the *Dhikr* and *Tasbeeh* may be recited. Similarly, the *dhikr* may also be performed during other states, when walking or in bed.

I'TIKAF

Another unique form of worship in this month is "*i'tikâf*" in which a person gives up all his activities, abandons his attachments, associations and routines and enters the mosque for a specific period.

Islam does not approve monasticism which is based on the concept that Allah's pleasure cannot be

attained without abandoning all worldly activities for ever. The Holy Qur'an has expressly condemned this concept. Islam has, instead, emphasized on earning one's livelihood through permissible means, on one's mingling with his family members and on discharging all the obligations toward his wife, children, relatives, neighbours and other acquaintants. But at the same time, as explained earlier in more detail, sometimes one's deep involvement in these activities slows down his spiritual progress. In order to repair this loss, a Muslim is required to spare a time in which he separates himself from the normal routine of worldly activities and to sit in seclusion, devoting his heart and soul for pure spiritual acts. *I'tikâf* is a buantiful way to carry out this objective. In *I'tikâf* one leaves his home and family and undertakes to remain in the mosque for a limited period. This unique mode of worship can be done any time in the year. However, it has been declared as a '*Sunnah mu'akkadah*' in the last ten days of Ramadân, because Ramadân is the most suitable time to carry out this worship. Moreover, the last ten days of Ramadân are the days in which '*Lailat-ul-Qadr*' normally occurs and as explained earlier, its definite time is unknown. It may occur in any of the odd nights of these days. When one is in the state of *i'tikâf* for the last ten days of Ramadân, he can surely benefit from its infinite merits, because even if he is sleeping in the '*Lailat-ul-Qadr*', while he is in the State of *i'tikâf*, it will be credited to his account as 'worship' in the '*Lailatul-Qadr*', because each and eve-

ry second in the state of *i'tikâf* is *'ibâdah*, even if one is eating, drinking or sleeping. This extraordinary privilege cannot be attained in one's home. That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to perform *i'tikâf* every year in Ramadân.

The detailed injunctions and regulations of '*i'tikâf* are explained in my book 'The Rules of *I'tikâf*' and it is not proper to reproduce all of them here. However, some fundamental rules of *i'tikâf* are summarized here:

Some Rules of *I'tikâf*

1. *I'tikâf* in the last ten days of Ramadân is *sunnah 'alal kifâyah*. It means that in each mosque, at last one person should sit in *I'tikâf*. If he does so, the requirement of *Sunnah* is fulfilled for the whole locality. However, if no person performs *i'tikâf*, the whole locality is responsible for not observing the *sunnah*. Therefore, the residents of a locality should make sure that some person is performing *i'tikâf* in their mosque. If no such person is available, they should prepare someone to do so.

2. The time of this *i'tikâf* commences immediately after the sunset of the twentieth day of Ramadân. Therefore, a person who wants to sit in *i'tikâf*, must enter the mosque before sunset on that day, so that sunset takes place while he is in the mosque.

3. The main requirement for a valid *i'tikâf* is that one remains in the limits of the mosque throughout the period of *I'tikâf* and never comes out of it, except

for the necessities like easing oneself by attending the call of nature.

4. The "limits of the mosque" for the purpose of *i'tikâf* are restricted to the places meant for offering *salah* and determined as such by the founders of the mosque or by its administration. Therefore, the places like the place of ablution, toilets etc. are not included in the "limits of a mosque" for the purpose of *i'tikâf*. Therefore, if a person enters these places without the aforesaid necessity, his *i'tikâf* shall terminate.

5. One can go out of the mosque during *i'tikâf* only for the following needs:

(i) to answer the call of nature

(ii) to make obligatory *ghusl*, i.e. in the state of impurity (*janabah*) (It should be remembered that it is not allowed during *i'tikâf* to go out of the mosque for having a non-obligatory bath, like the bath of Friday etc.)

(iv) to bring food where no other person is available to bring it. In this case it is allowed either to bring food to the mosque or to have food elsewhere outside the mosque.

(v) to offer the *jum'ah* prayer, if no *jum'ah* prayer is offered in the same mosque in which he is sitting in *i'tikâf*.

(vi) To move to another mosque in the event of a serious danger to one's life or property.

5. It is advisable that a person performing *i'tikâf*

avoids all unnecessary activities and spends the most of his time in the acts of worship, like *salah*, recitation of the Holy Qur'an or making *dhikr* or *tasbîh*. However, it is *makrûh* to remain silent totally.

6. The following acts result in terminating the *i'tikâf*:

(i) To leave the mosque even for a moment without the aforesaid needs

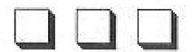
(ii) To remain outside the mosque after fulfilling the aforesaid needs.

(iii) To have sexual intercourse, or emission through some other intentional acts like kissing, cuddling etc. which are totally prohibited in *i'tikâf*.

(iv) Any act which breaks one's fast, like eating, drinking etc. (Since fasting is a pre-condition for a valid *masnûn i'tikâf*, the *i'tikâf* is automatically terminated by breaking of the fast).

7. If the *i'tikâf* is terminated for any reason, it becomes obligatory on the relevant person that he makes *qadâ'* of the *i'tikâf* for one day only (He need not to perform *i'tikâf* for ten days). for example, A started a *masnûn i'tikâf* on 21st night of Ramadân with intention to sit in *i'tikâf* for ten days, but on 25th of Ramadân he came out of the mosque mistakenly or unconsciously. His *i'tikâf* is thus terminated. Now, he has to make *qadâ'* of one day only. He needs not to repeat the *i'tikâf* for ten days, nor for five days. He is required to make *qadâ'* only for one day. therefore, he can dis-

charge this obligation by starting *i'tikâf* for one day, either in the same Ramadân, or after Ramadân by keeping a *nafl* fast, or in the next Ramadân. If he elects to perform *qadâ'* in the same Ramadân, he can sit in *i'tikâf* before the sunset of 25th Ramadân (in which his *i'tikâf* was terminated) and observe *i'tikâf* upto the sunset of 26th. His obligation will be discharged. Then, he is at liberty either to go home or to continue his *i'tikâf* as *nafl* (and not as a *sunnah or wâjib*)



The Month of
SHAWWAL

Shawwal is the tenth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. it comes immediately after Ramadan and has some specific rules attached to it. These are summarized hereunder:

Beginning of the Ashur-al-Hajj

Shawwal is the first of the three months named as "*Ashhur al-hajj*" (i.e. the months of hajj). Although the major acts of hajj are normally performed in the first ten days of Zulhijjah, yet the whole period starting from the first of Shawwal upto the 10th of Zulhijjah is held to be the period of hajj because some acts of hajj can be performed any time during this period. for example, the *Tawaf-ul-qudum*, followed by the *Sa'y* of hajj cannot be performed before Shawwal, while it can be performed any day after the beginning of shawwal. Similarly, an 'umrah perfromed before Shawwal cannot be treated as the 'umrah of *Tamattu'*, while the 'umrah performed in Shawwal can be affiliated to the hajj, making it a hajj of *Tamattu'*, Moreover, *ihram* of hajj should not be started before Shawwal, because it

is *makruh*, even though it may be held as a valid *ihram*. For these reasons these three months have been named as the 'months of hajj' and the month of Shawwal has the honour of being the first of these.

'Idul-Fitr

The second meritorious aspect of Shawwal is that it has been chosen by Allah Almighty for the celebration of "Eid-ul-fitr", one of the only two annual festivals recognized by the Shari'ah. This happy day is designed by the Shari'ah as a sign of gratefulness by the Muslims on the accomplishment of Ramadan, and as an immediate reward by Allah for those who spent the month of Ramadan in fasting and performing other forms of *'ibadah*.

Instead of commemorating an even from the past, the Shari'ah has prescribed the first of Shawwal as an annual festival for the Muslims at an occasion when they themselves accomplish a great *'ibadah*. This approach reminds the Muslims that they should not rely only on the accomplishments of their ancestors, rather, they should themselves perform meritorious acts to please their Creator.

In prescribing the ways to celebrate the happy day, Islam has adopted another unique approach. The festivals of other religions or nations normally comprise of some acts of rejoicing and enjoyment. The whole happy day is normally spent in dancing, singing

and playing.

Islam has, conversely, prescribed a very simple, prestigious and more humane way to observe the happy day. First of all, it is mandatory on all the well-off Muslims to start their day by paying "*Sadaqat-ul-fitr*" to the poor of their society, so that they, too, may enjoy the day alongwith others, and may not be worried for earning their livelihood at least in that day of happiness.

After paying the "*Sadaqat-ul-fitr*", the Muslims are required to proceed to an open place where they can offer the *'Eid* prayer collectively. In this way, they are supposed to present themselves before their Creator and offer two *rak'ats* of this special type of *Salah*, which makes them receive blessings from Allah and start their celebration by these divine blessings.

After the *Salah* also, they are supposed to rejoice the day in a responsible manner, without violating the limits prescribed for them and never indulging in the acts prohibited by Allah.

Keeping this point in view, we will now discuss specific rules prescribed for observing the day of *'Eidul-fitr*.

The Night preceding *'Eidul-Fitr'*.

It had been the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would not sleep in the night preceding the day of *'Eidul-fitr*. This night has been named in a Hadith

as لَيْلَةُ الْجَائِزَة (The night of reward). It means that Allah Almighty bestows his rewards to those who have spent the month of Ramadan abiding by the dictates of Shari'ah, and all their prayers in this night are accepted. Therefore, it is desirable to perform *nafl* prayers in this night. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

من قام ليلتى العيدين محتسبا

لم يمت قلبه يوم تموت القلوب

> whoever stands up (In worship) in the nights preceding the two Eids expecting rewards from his Lord, his heart will not die when the other hearts will die. (Ibn Majah)

To benefit from this opportunity, one should perform as much worship in this night as he can, and should pray for all his needs and desires.

Before going to '*Eid* Prayer

The following acts are prescribed as *Sunnah* at the beginning of the day of '*Eidul-Fitr* before proceeding to the '*Eid* prayer:

1. To wake up early in the morning.

2. To clean one's teeth with a Miswaak or a brush.

3. To have a bath.

4. To put on one's best available clothes.

5. To wear perfume.

6. To eat a sweet food, preferably dates, before the *'Eid* prayer.

7. To recite the following *Takbir* in the low voice while going to the *'Eid* prayer:

الله اكبر الله اكبر لا إله الا الله والله اكبر، الله اكبر ولله الحمد

Sadaqat-ul-fitr

Sadaqat-ulfitr is an obligation for every Muslim, male or female, who owns 613.35 grames of silver or its equivalent, either in the form of money, ornaments, stock-in-trade or in the form of some goods or commodities beyond one's normal needs. Every person who owns such an amount has to pay *Sadaqat-ul-fitr*, not only on behalf of himself but also on behalf of his minor children. The prescribed amount of *Sadaqat-ul-fitr* is 1.75 Kilograms of wheat or its value in money. This amount is prescribed for paying *sadaqat-ul-fitr* for one person only. If a person has some minor children, the same amount has to be paid on behalf of each one of them separately. The following points must be remembered with regard to the payment of *sadaqat-ul-fitr*.

1. *Sadaqat-ul-fitr* is obligated on each adult male or female separately, and the relevant adult person himself is responsible to pay it. The husband is not required to pay *sadaqat-ul-Fitr* on behalf of his wife nor is the wife supposed to pay it on behalf of her husband. Similarly, a father is not bound to pay *sadaqat-*

ul-fitr on behalf of his adult children or vice versa. However, if the head of the family, by his own free will, wishes to pay *sadaqat-ul-fitr* for each one of the members of his family, he should seek their authorisation for that purpose. In this case the *sadaqat-ul-fitr* paid by him will be valid on their behalf. If he did not pay the *sadaqat-ul-fitr* on behalf of any of the members of his family, he will not be responsible for it. Rather, it is the duty of every adult member of the family to discharge his own obligation or to request the head of the family to pay it on his or her behalf.

2. It is a *Sunnah* that the *sadaqat-ul-fitr* is paid before performing the *'Eid* prayer. It can also be paid before the *'Eid* day, but it is not advisable to delay it upto the performance of *'Eid* prayer. However, if a person has failed to pay on its proper time, he should pay it as soon as possible, whereby the obligation will stand discharged.

3. The *sadaqat-ul-fitr* is not necessary on behalf of a child who has born after the break of dawn in the *'Eid* day, nor is it necessary to pay *sadaqat-ul-fitr* on behalf of a person who dies before the dawn of the *'Eid* day.

4. *Sadaqat-ul-fitr* should be paid only to a person who is entitled to receive *Zakah*.

The *'Eid* Prayer

The second obligation on *'Eid* day is to perform the

'*Eid* prayer. Some rules in this respect are mentioned hereunder:

1. The '*Eid* prayer is *Wajib* (obligatory) on every male Muslim.

2. The '*Eid* prayer can be performed any time between the *Ishraq* and *Zawal*.

3. It is preferable that the '*Eid* prayer is performed at an open field and not in a mosque. However, if, it is difficult for any reason to perform it in an open field, it can also be performed in a big mosque.

4. It is not advisable to hold the '*Eid* prayer in every mosque, rather it is preferable that the people of several small mosques either perform it in an open field or, in its absence, in a big mosque which can accommodate a large number of people.

5. No *Nafl salah* can be performed before the '*Eid* prayer, neither in one's home, nor at the place of '*Eid* prayer. Similarly, *Nafl* prayer cannot be performed after the '*Eid* prayer at the same place. However, it can be performed after one comes back to his home.

6. The '*Eid* prayer has neither *Azaan* nor *Iqamah*.

How to perform *Eid* Prayer

The '*Eid* Prayer has two *raka'at* to perform in the normal way, with the only addition of six *Takbirs*, three of them in the beginning of the first *raka'ah*, and three of them just before *ruku'* in the second *raka'ah*.

The detailed way of performing the *'Eid* prayer is as follows:

The *Imam* will begin the prayer without *adhan* or *iqamah*. He will begin the prayer by reciting *Takbir* of *Tahrimah* (*Allahu Akbar*). You should raise your hands upto the ears, and reciting the *Takbir*, you give a little pause during which you should recite *Thana'* (*Subhanakallahumma.......*). After the completion of *Thana'* the *Imam* will recite *Takbir* (*Allahu Akbar*) three times, and after reciting each *Takbir* (*Allahu Akbar*) in a low voice, you should bring your hands down and leave them earthwards. But, after the third *Takbir*, you should set them on your navel as you do in the normal prayer.

After these three *Takbirs* the *Imam* will recite the Holy Qur'an which you should listen calmly and quietly. The rest of the *raka'ah* will be performed in the normal way.

After rising for the second *raka'ah*, the *Imam* will begin the recitations from the Holy Qur'an during which you should remain calm and quiet. When the *Imam* finishes his recitation, he will recite three *takbirs* once again, but this time it will be before bowing down for ruku'. At each *Takbir* you should raise your hands upto the ears, and after saying "*Allahu Akbar*', bring them down and leave them earthwards. After these three *takbirs* have been called and completed,

the *Imam* will say another *takbir* for bowing down into the *ruku'* position. At this *takbir* you need not raise your hands. You just bow down for your *ruku'* saying, '*Allahu Akbar*'. The rest of the *salah* will be performed in its usual way.

Khutbah: The address of *'Eid-ul-fitr*

In this *salah*, khutbah is a sunnah and is delivered after the *salah*, unlike the *salah* of jumu'ah where it is *fard* and is delivered before the *salah*. However, listening to the *khutbah* of *'Eid salah* is *wajib* or necessary and must be heard in perfect peace and silence.

It is a *sunnah* that the *Imam* begins the first *khutbah* by reciting takbirs '*Allahu Akbar*' nine times and the second *khutbah* with reciting it seven times.

Note:

The way of 'Eid prayer described above is according to the Hanafi school of Muslim jurists. some other jurists, like Imam Shafi'i, have some other ways to perform it. They recite Takbir twelve times before beginning the recitations from the Holy Qur'an in both the raka'at. This way is also permisible. If the *Imam*, being of the Shafi'i school, follows this way, you can also follow him. Both ways are based on the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

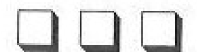
Six fasts in the month of Shawwal

It is commendable to keep six fasts in the month of Shawwal. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

من صام رمضان ثم اتبعه لبستٍ من شوال كان كصيام الدهر

> Whoever completes fasts of Ramadan then adds to them the fast of six days in the month of Shawwal, it will carry the thawab of fasting for the whole year. (Sahih Muslim)

This *hadith* had described the great *thawab* of six fasts of this month. The scholars have interpreted this *hadith* by saying that according to the recognized rules of Shari'ah every good deed is rewarded ten times more *thawab* of its origin, therefore, the *thawab* of 30 days of *Ramadan* amounts to the *thawab* of fasting for 300 days. If the fasts of Ramadan are followed by six more fasts, they carry the *thawab* of 60 days more, raising the aggregate *thawab* to 360 which is the number of days of one year according to Islamic calendar. Therefore, the Muslims should take this opportunity of acquiring such an enormous reward from Allah. It is more preferable to start these fasts from the 2nd of Shawwal and keep fasting upto the 7th of it. However, if, they are kept in other days, it is hoped that the requirement of the above hadith may also be fulfilled.



The Month of ZULQA'DAH

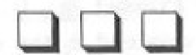
This is the eleventh month of the Islamic lunar calender. It is the first of the four sanctified months (*al-ashhur-al-hurum*) in which battles were prohibited in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It is also one of the months of Hajj as explained in the discussion about Shawwal.

However, no specific rules are prescribed for this month, except that the persons performing *hajj* are required to follow the rules of *hajj*.

Some false beliefs are attached to this month by ignorant people. They say that this month is not a blessed month, therefore, marriages should not be held or solemnized in the month of Zulqa'dah. According to them, a marriage held in this month may not be successful, rather it may bring misfortune to the spouses.

This belief is absolutely baseless. A Muslim should never attend to such superstitious whims. In fact, the month is one of the sanctified months, as mentioned earlier. It is also proved through authentic traditions that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had performed *'umrah* four

times in his madanite life. Three of them were performed in the month of Zulqa'dah, the fourth being performed alongwith the last Hajj. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ has chosen this month for performing the great *'ibadah* of 'umrah how can one claim that the month has an element of misfortune? Therefore, no Muslim should ever hesitate in holding marriages or other ceremonies in this month on such a false assumption of unluckiness.



The Month of
ZULHIJJAH

The month of Zulhijjah is the last month of the Islamic calender. Literally it mean "the month of Hajj." Oobviously this name of the month indicates that the great annual worship of "hajj" is performed in this month. for this reason it has a peculiar significance as compared to other months of the year. Some specific merits and rules relevant to this month are mentioned below:

First ten Days

The first ten days of the month of Zulhijjah are among the most magnificent days in Islamic calendar. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "One fast during these days is equal to the fasting of one complete year, and the worship of one night during this period is equal to the worship in the "*Lailatul-Qadr*".

Every Muslim should avail of this wonderful opportunity by offering during this period as much '*Iba'dah* (acts of worship) to Allah as he or she can.

The 9th day of Zulhijjah

The 9th day of the month of Zulhijjah is called '*Youmul* - "*Arafah*' (The Day of '*Arafah*). This is the

date when the *Hujjaj* (Hajj pilgrims, plural of Haajj) assemble on the plain of *'Arafat*, six miles away from Makkah al-Mukarramah, where they perform the most essential part of the prescribed duties of Hajj, namely, the *'Wuqoof* of *'Arafat* (the stay in *'Arafat*).

The Fast of *Youmul 'Arafah*

For those not performing Hajj, it is *mustahabb* (desirable) to fast on this day according to their own Calendar. It sometimes occurs that the date of 9th Zulhijjah falls on different days in different countries according to the sighting of the moon. In such cases, Muslims of each country should observe *'Youmul 'Arafah* according to the lunar dates of their own country.

For example, if *'Youmul 'Arafah'* is being observed in Saudi Arabia on Friday, and in Pakistan on Saturday, Pakistani muslims should treat Saturday as *'Youmul 'Arafah'* and should fast on that day if they desire to benefit from the fast of *'Youmul 'Arafah'*.

The fast of *'Youmul 'Arafah'* has been emphasized by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a *mustahabb* (desirable) act. According to a *hadith*, the fast of this day becomes a cause, hopefully so, of forgiveness for sins committed in one year.

Takbir-ut-tashriq

As from the *Fajr* of the 9th Zulhijjah upto the *'Asr* prayer of the 13th, it is obligatory on each Muslim to

recite the *Takbir* of *Tashriq* in the following words.

اللهُ أكبَرُ اللهُ اكبَرُ لا الهَ الاَّ اللهُ واللهُ اكبَرُ اللهُ اكبَرُ
وَلِلّٰهِ الحَمْدُ

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar,

La Ilaha Illallahu, Wallahu Akbar,

Allahu Akbar wa lillahilhamd.

There is no god but Allah and Allah is great, Allah is great and to Allah belongs all praise.

According to authentic Islamic sources, it is obligatory on each Muslim, to recite this *Takbir* after every obligatory (*fard*) *salah*. For women also, it is commendable though not obligatory. Whether you are performing *salah* with Jama'ah (collectively) or on your own (individually) makes no difference. You must recite the *Takbir*. However, male Muslims should recite it in a loud voice, while females should recite it in a low voice.

On the *Eid* day

The following acts are *sunnah* on the day of *Eidul-adha*:

1. To wake up early in the morning.
2. To clean one's teeth with a *miswak* or brush
3. To have a bath.
4. To put on one's best available clothes.
5. To use perfume.

6. Not to eat before the *Eid* prayer.

7. To recite the *Takbir* of *Tashriq* in a loud voice while going to the *Eid* prayer.

How to perform *Eid* prayers

The *Eid* prayer has two *raka'at* performed in the normal way, with the only addition of six *Takbirs*, three of them in the beginning of the first *raka'ah*, and three of them just before *ruku'* in the second *raka'ah*. The detailed way of performing the *Eid* prayer is as follows:

The Imam will begin the prayer without *adhan* or *iqamah*. He will begin the prayer by reciting *Takbir* of *Tahrimah* (*Allahu Akbar*). You should raise your hands upto the ears, and reciting the *Takbir*, you should set your hands on your navel. The Imam will give a little pause during which you should recite *Thana'* (*Tubhanakallahumma...*). After the completion of *Thana'*, the *Imam* will recite *Takbir* (*Allahu Akbar*) three times. At the first two calls of *Takbir* you should raise your hands upto the ears, and after reciting *Takbir* (*Allahu Akbar*) in a low voice, should bring your hands down and leave them earthwards. But, after the third *Takbir*, you should set them on your navel as you do in the normal prayers.

After these three *Takbirs*, the Imam will recite the Holy Qur'an which you should listen calmly and quietly. The rest of the *raka'ah* will be performed in the

normal way.

After rising for the second *raka'ah*, the Imam will begin the recitations from the Holy *Qur'an* during which you should remain calm and quiet. When the Imam finishes his recitation, he will recite three *Takbirs* once again, but this time it will be just before bowing down for *ruku'*. At each *Takbir* you should raise your hands upto the ears, and after saying '*Allahu Akbar*', bring them down and leave them earthwards. After these three *takbirs* have been called and completed, the Imam will say another *takbir* for bowing down into the *ruku'* position. At this *takbir* you need not raise your hands. You just bow down for your *ruku'* saying, '*Allahu Akbar*'. The rest of the *salah* will be performed in its usual way.

Khutbah: The Address of _Eidul-Adha_

In this *salah* of *Eid*, *khutbah* is a *sunnah* and is delivered after the *salah*, unlike the *salah* of *Jumu'ah* where it is *fard* and is delivered before the *salah*. However, listening to the *khutbah* of *Eid salah* is *wajib* or necessary and must be heard in perfect peace and silence.

It is a *sunnah* that the *imam* begins the first *Khutbah* by reciting *takbir* (الله اكبر) nine times and the second *Khutbah* with reciting it seven times.

Note

The way of *Eid* prayer described above is accord-

ing to the *Hanfi* school of Muslim jurists. Some other jurists, like Imam Shafi'i, have some other ways to perform it. They recite *Takbir* twelve times before beginning the recitations of the Holy Qur'an in both the *raka'at*. This way is also permissible. If the Imam, being of the Shafi'i school, follows this way, you can also follow him. Both ways are based on the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

SACRIFICE OR *QURBANI:* PHILOSOPHY AND RULES

The Urdu and persian word *'Qurbani'* is derived from the Arabic word *'Qurban'*. Lexically, it means an act performed to seek Allah's good pleasure. Originally, the word *'Qurban'* included all acts of charity because the purpose of charity is nothing but to seek Allah's pleasure. But, in precise religious terminology, the word was later confined to the sacrifice of an animal slaughtered for the sake of Allah.

The sacrifice of an animal has always been treated as a recognized form of worship in all religious orders originating from a divine book. Even in pagan societies, the sacrifice of an animal is recognized as a form of worship, but it is done in the name of some idols and not in the name of Allah, a practice totally rejected by Islam.

In the Shari'ah of our beloved Prophet ﷺ the sacrifice of an animal has been recognized as a form of

worship only during three days of the month of Zulhijjah, namely, the 10th, 11th and 12th of the month. This is to commemorate the unparalleled sacrifice offered by the Prophet Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام when he, in pursuance to a command of Allah conveyed to him in a dream, prepared himself to slaughter his beloved son, Sayyidna Isma'il عليه السلام and actually did so - but, Allah Almighty, after testing the quantum of his submission, sent down a sheep and saved his son from the logical fate of slaughter. It is from that time onwards that the sacrifice of an animal became an obligatory duty to be performed by every well-to-do Muslim.

Qurbani is a demonstration of total submission to Allah and a proof of complete obedience to Allah's will or command. When a Muslim offers a *Qurbani*, this is exactly what he intends to prove. Thus, the *Qurbani* offered by a Muslim signifies that he is a slave of Allah at his best and that he would not hesitate even for a moment, once he receives an absolute command from his Creator, to surrender before it, to obey it willingly, even if it be at the price of his life and possessions. When a true and perfect Muslim receives such a command from Allah, his natural instinct stops him from indulging in the futile search for the reasonability behind the command; nor does he make his obedience dependent upon the command's reasonablity' as perceived through his limited understanding. He

knows that Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise and that his own reason cannot encompass the knowledge and wisdom underlying the divine command. He, therefore, submits to the divine command, even if he cannot find out any reason or wisdom behind it.

This is exactly what the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام did. Apparently, there was no reason why a father should slaughter his innocent son. But, When came the command from Allah, he never asked about the reason of that command, nor did he hesitate to obey it. Even his minor son when asked by his father about the dream he had seen, never questioned the legitimacy of the command, nor did he pine or whine about it, nor did he ask for one good reason why he was being slaughtered. The one and only response he made was:

يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"Father, do what you have been ordered to do. You shall find me, God willing, among the patient".

The present-day *Qurbani* is offered in memory of this great model of submission set before us by the great father and the great son. So *Qurbani* must be offered in our time emulating the same ideal and attitude of submission.

This, then, is the true philosophy of *Qurbani*. With this in mind, one can easily unveil the fallacy of those

who raise objections against *Qurbani* on the basis of economic calculations and statistics and make it out to be a wastage of money, resource and livestock. Unable to see beyond mundane benefits, they cannot understand the spirit Islam wants to plant and nourish among its followers, the spirit of total submission to Allah's will which equips man with most superior qualities so necessary to keep humanity in a state of lasting peace and welfare.

Qurbani is nothing but a powerful symbol of the required human conduct *vis-a-vis* the divine commands, however "irrational" or "uneconomic" they may seem to be in their appearance. Thus, the distrustful quest for mundane economic benefits behind *Qurbani* is, in fact, the negation of its real philosophy and the very spirit underlying it.

No doubt, there are in every form of worship ordained by Allah, certain worldly benefits too, but they are not the main purpose of these prescribed duties, nor should they be treated as a pre-condition to submission and obedience. All acts of worship, including *Qurbani*, must be carried out with a spirit of total submission to Allah, irrespective of their economic, social or political benefits. This is what Ibrahim عليه السلام did, and this is what every true Muslim is required to do.

Keeping this in view, we are giving here some rules governing the worship of *Qurbani* in our Sha-

ri'ah according to the Hanafi School.

The Time of *Qurbani*

Qurbani can only be performed during the three days of *Eid*, namely the 10th, 11th and 12th of the month of Zulhijjah. It is only in these days that slaughtering of an animal is recognized as an act of worship. No *Qurbani* can be performed in any other days of the year.

Although *Qurbani* is permissible on each of the three aforesaid days, yet it is preferable to perform it on the first day i.e. the 10th of Zulhijjah.

No *Qurbani* is allowed before the *Eid* prayer is over. However, in small villages where the *Eid* prayer is not to be performed, *Qurbani* can be offered any time after the break of dawn on the 10th of Zulhijjah.

Qurbani can also be performed in the two nights following the *Eid* day, but it is more advisable to perform it during day time.

Who is required to perform *Qurbani*?

Every adult Muslim, male or female, who owns 613.35 grams of silver or its equivalent in money, personal ornaments, stock-in-trade or any other form of wealth which is surplus to his basic needs, is under an obligation to offer a *Qurbani*. Each adult member of a family who owns the above mentioned amount must perform his own *Qurbani* separately. If the husband owns the required quantity, but the wife does not,

the *Qurbani* is obligatory on the husband only and vice-versa. If both of them have the prescribed quantum of wealth, both should perform *Qurbani* separately.

If the adult children live with their parents, *Qurbani* is incumbent on each one of them possessing the prescribed quantum. The *Qurbani* offered by a husband for himself does not fulfil the obligation of his wife, nor can the *Qurbani* offered by a father discharge his son or daughter from their obligation. Each one of them should care for his own.

However, if a husband or a father, apart from offering his own *Qurbani*, gives another *Qurbani* on behalf of his wife or his son, he can do so with their permission.

No Alternate for *Qurbani*

Some people think that instead of offering a *Qurbani* they should give its amount to some poor people as charity. This attitude is totally wrong. Actually, there are different forms of worship obligatory on Muslims. Each one of them has its own importance and none of them can stand for the other. It is not permissible for a Muslim to perform *salah* instead of fasting in Ramadan, nor is it permissible for him to give some charity instead of observing the obligatory *Salah*. similarly, *Qurbani* is an independent form of worship and this obligation cannot be discharged by

spending some money in charity.

However, if somebody, out of his ignorance or negligence, could not offer *Qurbani* on the three prescribed days (10th, 11th and 12th Zulhijjah) then, in that case only, he can give the price of a *Qurbani* as *sadaqah* to those entitled to receive *Zakah*. But during the days of *Qurbani* no *Sadaqah* can discharge the obligation.

The Animals of *Qurbani*

The following animals can be slaughtered to offer a *Qurbani*:

1. Goat, either male or female, of at least one year of age.
2. Sheep, either male or female, of at least six months of age.
3. Cow, ox buffalo of at least two years of age.
4. Camel, male or female, of at least five years of age.

One head of goat or sheep is enough only for one person's *Qurbani*. But as for all other animals like cow, buffalo or camel, one head of each is equal to seven offerings thus allowing seven persons to offer *Qurbani* jointly in one such animal.

If the seller of an animal claims that the animal is of the recognized age and there is no apparent evidence to the contrary, one can trust his statement and

the sacrifice of such an animal is lawful.

Rules about Defective Animals

The following defective animals are not acceptable in *Qurbani*:

1. Blind, one eyed or lame animal.
2. An animal so emaciated that it cannot walk to its slaughtering place.
3. An animal with one-third part of the ear or the nose or the tail missing.
4. An animal that has no teeth at all, or the major number of its teeth are missing.
5. An animal born without ears.

The following animals are acceptable in *Qurbani*:

1. A castrated he - goat. (Rather, its *Qurbani* is more preferable).
2. An animal that has no horns, or its horns are broken. However, if the horns of an animal are uprooted totally so as to create a defect in the brain, its *Qurbani* is not lawful.
3. An animal the missing part of whose ear, nose or tail is less than one third.
4. A sick or injured animal, unless it has some above mentioned defects rendering its *Qurbani* unlawful.

The *Sunnah* Method of *Qurbani*

It is more preferable for a Muslim to slaughter the animal of his *Qurbani* with his own hands. However, if he is unable to slaughter the animal himself, or does not want to do so for some reason, he can request another person to slaughter it on his behalf. In this case also, it is more preferable that he, at least, be present at the time of slaughter. However, his absence at the time of slaughter does not render the *Qurbani* invalid, if he has authorised the person who slaughtered the animal on his behalf.

It is a *Sunnah* to lay the animal with its face towards the Qiblah, and to recite the following verse of the Holy Quran:

إِنِّىْ وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِىْ فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيْفًا وَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ

> I, being upright, turn my face towards the One who has created the heavens and the earth, and I am not among those who associate partners with Allah. (6:79)

But the most essential recitation when slaughtering an animal is: 'بِسْمِ اللهِ اَللهُ اَكْبَرُ' "In the name of Allah, Allah is great". If somebody intentionally avoids to recite it when slaughtering an animal, it does not only make his *Qurbani* unlawful, but also renders the animal *haram*, and it is not permissible to eat the meat of that animal. However, if a person did not avoid this

recitation intentionally, but he forgot to recite it when slaughtering the animal, this mistake is forgiven and both the *Qurbani* and the slaughter are lawful.

If Somebody is unable to recite بِسْمِ اللهِ اللهُ اَكْبَرْ in the Arabic language, he can recite the name of Allah in his own language by saying, "In the name of Allah".

Distribution of the Meat

If an animal is sacrificed by more than one person, like cow or camel, its meat should be distributed equally among its owners by weighing the meat strictly and not at random or by mere guess. Even if all the partners agree on its distribution without weighing, it is still not permissible according to *shari'ah*.

However, if the actual weighing is not practicable due to some reason, and all the partners agree to distribute the meat without weighing, distribution by guess can be done with the condition that each share necessarily contains either a leg of the animal or some quantity of its liver.

Although the person offering a *Qurbani* can keep all its meat for his own use, yet, it is preferable to distribute one-third among the poor, another one-third among his relatives and then, keep the rest for his personal consumption.

All parts of the sacrificed animal can be used for personal benefit, but none can be sold, nor can be given to the butcher as a part of his wages. If somebody

has sold the meat of the *Qurbani* or its skin, he must give the accrued price as *sadaqah* to a poor man who can receive *Zakah*.

HAJJ

The most important way of worship performed in this month is "Hajj", one of the four pillars of Islam. The Muslims from every part of the world assemble in Arabia to perform this unique way of worship. Hajj is a worship which requires at least five days to be performed in its proper way. There are detailed rules for different acts of hajj for which separate books are available, and the present book does not aim at explaining all these details. However, some basic information about its obligation is being given here:

1. Hajj is obligatory on every adult Muslim who can afford to go to Makkah during the hajj season, whether on foot or by any other carriage.

2. If a person can travel to Makkah to perform hajj, but he cannot travel to Madinah, hajj is obligatory on him also. He can perform hajj without visiting Madinah.

3. A Muslim woman cannot travel for hajj unless she is accompanied by a *mahram* (i.e. husband or relative of a prohibited degree like son, father, brother etc.) If she does not find any *mahram* to accompany her, hajj is not obligatory on her until she finds one. However, she must make a will that in case she dies

before performing hajj, his heirs should arrange for her *hajj-e-badal* out of her left over property.

4. Hajj is obligated only once in one's life. After performing the obligatory hajj; one is not required to perform it again. However, he can perform the *nafl* (optional hajj as many times as he or she wishes.

